**Sanctimonious**

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# Sanctimonious

by Everett_Harte

Summary

Hannibal Lecter knew his mind well. Or at least he thought he did. But recent regret over killing his not-patient has him thinking otherwise.

Set vaguely in Season 1, Hannibal Lecter decides instead of winding him up and watching him go, it's far more prudent to kill Will Graham.

This comes back to bite him in the ass. Or stab him in the chest, as it were.

Notes

I don't even know where this came from. It's really different from what I've ever written and I actually feel like I need to post some warnings. Please heed them!

Trigger warnings: blood, gore. Graphic descriptions of evisceration, organ harvesting, and main character deaths.

If it helps, Will and Hannibal will get together, so yay?

# And ever reaching to grasp the stars...

Even if his mind was fully his, his thoughts weren't necessarily his own. They kept trailing back to the newest not-patient he was having simple conversations with. The smell of a sweet burning fever was plaguing him. Part of him wanting to see how far the agent would fall, actually see the psychological effects he knew on a scientific level but had never witnessed. Part of him was curious of the deterioration. But the more troubling part he couldn't reconcile with himself was the affection he felt for Will. Hannibal was of expensive means but ultimately had simple tastes. He liked fresh food and assuaging any minute curiosities that came up in his day. Or even the curiosities of his own creation.

Yet he was at an impasse. Hannibal knew his own mind well. He kept it well organized in his mind palace, mostly to revisit the loveliest of his macabre creations. But there was an ever growing area purely dedicated to Will Graham. Mostly cataloging his reactions to said crime scenes and the insights he provided that were such a perfect composite of Hannibal himself. If he was a lesser man, he would say he was in love. But Hannibal was a man that knew himself, and he knew he didn't have the capacity to love. Not anymore.

What he kept coming back to was the potential unpredictability of the encephalitis. He was partly titillated at witnessing that sharp mind being warped to breaking. But the unpredictability was what he kept coming back to. Will made large leaps of logic between available facts and whatever physical evidence was available. His ability for connections and resulting arrests is what troubled the doctor. Will's mind was brilliant even under the duress the fever was giving him. One could even argue his hallucinations were helping facilitate his leaps of logic.

Doctor Lecter came to a conclusion. The experiment had gone on longer than he had anticipated. He valued his continued freedom far more than any spark of emotion he felt. He was going to need to get rid of Will Graham.

After all, if he waited any longer, the meat could spoil.

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It was easy enough to invite Will over for an impromptu dinner after a long day at the academy. Will felt comfortable in his presence. That shouldn't have caused the small pang in his chest that it did. They sipped their shiraz in Hannibal's study as the roast finished braising. It was easy enough to discuss the latest developments in the Copy Cat case. It reaffirmed Hannibal's final decision. A timer sounded off in the distance.

He took one last sip before putting his wine glass on the side table, "I must bring the roast out and let it rest." When Will made to stand, potentially to help, Hannibal smiled lightly. How well mannered. "Sit, I insist. You are my guest. We still have time yet before we eat. We can

finish our discussion when I return." Will nodded his ascent as he resettled in his chair, cradling the wine glass between fingertips.

Hannibal took his time to move his choice cut of a rather rude sommelier to a serving plate. He used the cooking liquid and a far better vintage of *Red Bordeaux Supérieur* than was suggested by that sommelier for his sauce. It was a young wine but had a surprisingly low acidity and light fruity taste. Something young and lovely to end the night.

He plated his root vegetables around the roast and placed it on his dining table. Taking a moment to settle the tableau of his last meal with Will in his mind, he turned back to return to his study.

As Hannibal entered the room, he first saw Will's empty wine glass sitting on the side table beside his own half-filled one. He next saw Will standing at the bookcase at the far end of his study, where he kept his cooking reference books. Smiling and remembering that Will often turned to the books at his office when he was unsure or anxious, he made to speak before he noticed the stillness of Will.

Will turned his head and met Hannibal's eyes. The stillness continued to unsettle Hannibal as it was something he had never seen exhibited by him before.

"It's you. This whole time, it's been you," Will murmured as smoothed down the page he had been reading. Hannibal noticed it was one of his first French cookbooks that he had written extensive notes in. He shouldn't be surprised that Will could read French. Louisiana was the home he often cited, even with all the moving around in his youth.

On the page that fingers brushed over faint pencil notes from years ago, laid recipes for sweetbreads. The Ripper was known for his taking of organ meats and Hannibal never was one to spare it from his dinner parties. That brilliant mind had made the final leap that he was hoping to intercept. Hannibal's own mind was firmly set.

"Will, I'm unsure to what you are referring to. But I've come to call you to the dining room to finish our discussion."

"Stop. Just stop. I can't---of course," he placed the open book on his vacated chair. Turning to fully face Hannibal, his hands kept clenching, "Of course. You were always one step ahead weren't you? You even inserted yourself into the investigation. Did you decide to consult with me when you found out I was the one most likely to catch you? Are you happy with how you've fucked with my head?" Will yelled as he strode toward Hannibal.

Hannibal entered the study fully and walked by the side table, picking up his wine glass. Taking a sip he made it to the desk, all the while, Will's eyes tracking him. Placing his glass on the desk near the half full wine bottle, he laid his hand against the wood grain of the desk, fingers at the edge of a pile of papers.

"Dear Will. You must calm yourself. Simply because I have a cook book doesn't make me a serial killer. Sit down and let me refresh your wine."

“Doctor Lecter. I see you fully formed now. You are the intelligent psychopath in our midst. I know your shadow and I can finally see who it’s attached to.” Will looked down and gave a harsh laugh, “You were supposed to help me look. Well I finally fucking see.”

When his eyes returned to the Doctor, it was only to note that he had crept up silently in the brief moment he had looked away. A scalpel eviscerated Will neatly. Will’s hands rose up to catch what he knew was his intestines, but didn’t look. He kept eye contact with Hannibal and kept it as he fell. Arms braced him at his shoulders and hip, gentling his fall.

“Will. Dear Will,” Hannibal’s hand cupped Will’s cheek as tears started to run down his face. He removed his glasses, placing them off to the side. “I knew you were exceptional. Never in my life have I wanted to be more wrong.” The doctor’s thumb dragged through a tear and brought it up to his mouth. Will mouthed silent words, but Hannibal was not one for trying to decipher something he could never know the true answer to. Instead, he focused on those blue eyes that stared at him with cold fury and betrayal.

As Will Graham resigned himself to his fate for one stupid mistake, Hannibal brought the scalpel up and quickly slit his throat. A malevolent god could be benevolent when he wished.

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Hannibal carried Will Graham’s body down to the basement. He would have to dispose of the rug in his study and steam clean his floors before Will’s disappearance became apparent as a precaution. He placed him on a stainless steel surgical table then sliced that awful flannel shirt off. The rest of his motions became mechanical; it was after all, simply another body. That he had to repeat this to himself several times was of no true consequence.

He performed a text book y-incision and split open the rib cage. He pulled out the remaining intestines and placed them in a large bowl on a nearby surgical cart. Hannibal cut out the liver, lungs, and lastly the heart. If he cupped the heart and looked down at it for longer than necessary, the only one who would know would be himself.

And lately, he was starting to think he didn’t know himself as well as he thought.

He put the organs on a tray and walked back toward the stairs. When he looked back from the top to the body on the table: pale from blood loss and skin unfurled like a cadaverous sunflower, maw open and empty, Hannibal’s hands trembled.

He turned off the light and firmly closed the door. Taking a deep breath of air that wasn’t scented with blood, he made his way to the kitchen to vacuum seal his newly acquired meat.

He was going to freeze it. Hannibal did not think he could bear to eat it just yet.

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Hannibal cleaned methodically. He rolled up the rug in his study and wiped up the blood stains as best he could before he could pull his steam cleaner from storage. He cleaned the door knobs and kitchen counters quickly. Anything to keep his mind off of the body in his basement. When he had vaguely thought of killing Will Graham, he had thought to use the body in a large masterpiece to finally push Jack Crawford over the edge. But at the moment, Hannibal didn't dare spare any thought to what he was going to do with it. He simply cleaned.

When he finally made it to the shower, he cringed at the cold water. His clothes had ended up in a fireplace in the same study they had been sullied. Hannibal knew he would have to return to that room later to clean up the ashes but that could wait till the morning. He adjusted the water temperature and proceeded to wash Will Graham's blood off.

Hannibal walked back to the kitchen after he had dressed in a white oxford shirt and black slacks, casual wear for him. He would not be sleeping tonight. He passed the still set dining table before he paused. He gathered up the extra place setting to return to the kitchen. As he put away the charger and utensils, Hannibal heard a muffled thump. Odd. He finished putting the plates away and turned as he heard a loud bang---a door knob banging against a wall. He quickly grabbed a knife and held it by his hip as he stood behind the kitchen island. Perhaps it was an unfortunate burglar. His fingers tightened around the handle. A rage he had tempered down fully erupted. He had made a mistake earlier, and if he couldn't change that, then he could take it out on someone else. Jack Crawford would be lucky to identify this body as human when he had finished.

"That fucking hurt you asshole."

Will Graham walked back into Hannibal's kitchen and apparently life itself. He was still shirtless. His torso was streaked with dried blood, especially centered on the areas of incision. But there were no visible cuts from what Hannibal could see. His jeans were heavily blood stained and looked almost black.

Hannibal used to know his mind well. At the moment, he was unsure if this was a delusion or a stress induced hallucination. The answer came easily to him as Will walked purposely around the island into Hannibal's personal space. He could smell him. That warm Will smell that was tempered with dog hair and that awful aftershave. But for once, there was no sickly sweet fever smell. Only the smell of old blood. And if Hannibal couldn't trust his mind, he could always trust his hyper developed sense of smell.

"Will…" Hannibal whispered. He gazed into those same eyes that hours ago held the same fury. His grip on the knife slackened. "How…?"

"Don't fucking focus on the 'how', think on the 'why'," Will stated as his hand reached down and easily took hold of the knife. "That's what I tell my students anyways."

Hannibal was momentarily confused, then looked down at Will's hand with the newly acquired knife.

“I’m going to really enjoy this Doctor,” Will said as he moved his arm back swiftly before plunging the blade hilt-deep into Hannibal’s chest. Hannibal looked down at the resulting wound, blood blossoming across his white shirt. He looked at Will and found he was meeting his eyes once again. They were still vengeful, but had a sheen of tears held back.

“Never in my life have I wanted to be more wrong.” Will pulled the knife out and Hannibal fell to his knees, hands grasping at his chest. He knew his heart was hit, a lung was also nicked and rapidly filled with blood.

“Well played Will,” he murmured as he laid himself out on the kitchen floor. He kept his gaze centered on Will. If he was to be killed, he was happy it was at the hands of the one he cared for the most. His regret dissipated. If this was the price, so be it.

Hannibal felt content. He felt like he knew his mind once again.

And Hannibal Lecter knew no more.

# I found the hand of my beloved

Chapter Notes

I was so excited that the response to this story was so great. I honestly thought I'd just be writing this for myself. So thank you so much for all your comments and kudos, they mean so much to me.

No warnings this chapter. But some of the 'strangely sappy' comes into play.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal woke slowly. His eyes felt heavy and dried out, that gritty feeling you get when you didn't sleep long enough. As he finally found the ability to focus, he noticed he felt a strange tacky coldness on his chest. He also noted he was on the floor of his kitchen. In a pool of blood. Then he remembered. Will Graham was alive and this blood was all his own. He brought a hand up to his chest to assess the damage, perhaps he had let the shock of Will Graham's resurrection distract himself enough to misdiagnose. His fingers pulled the shirt away from his skin to let his other hand probe the entry wound. Or they would, if they could, but there was simply no entry wound. All he felt was smooth skin, intermittently covered with chest hair. He felt the remaining tackiness of the blood and even the dried edges that were starting to flake off.

Looking again at the floor, he found that the amount of blood was far too much for him to be alive and breathing. Taking a moment to feel for the wound again, Hannibal felt the reassuring rhythm of his heartbeat. He was alive, when he scientifically shouldn't be. Sitting up and leaning his back against the lower cabinets, Hannibal took a moment to regulate his breathing before he fell into a panic attack. He hadn't had one of those since he was a child. As he slowly breathed in and out, he found his rhythm disturbed when he heard the faint sounds of cutlery on a plate; someone was eating in his dining room.

Standing up and moving around the kitchen island, he felt almost uncertain as his feet slipped through the puddle of his own blood. It had congealed and had changed to a dark oxidized burgundy. He couldn't understand how this had happened. How were he and Will still alive?

He stood in the doorway to his dining room, watching Will Graham eat the roast that was supposed to be their dinner. He gracefully cut his meat before dipping it lightly in the sauce he had pooled on the side of his plate. Hannibal noted that Will had showered in the time he had been out and wore a navy button up with the sleeves rolled up and the too-wide neck left un-buttoned. He had also raided Hannibal's trousers and wore a pair of dark khakis that were a little too long and covered the majority of his feet. The doctor was oddly charmed by the vision of Will in his clothes. He was also overcome with relief that the agent was indeed alive.

Will sliced a parsnip in half before popping it in his mouth. He dabbed at his lips with a napkin that was surprisingly on his lap before he tossed it on the table. Will ate the other half of parsnip before he turned in his chair.

“So you too huh?”

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It was funny to see Hannibal so flummoxed. He usually had a cool countenance that Will had seen as polite professionalism but was actually what Hannibal approximated as human. It was unsettling, but Will couldn’t help but feel the bite of regret as he saw the light leave Hannibal’s eyes as he died. He had been in numerous killers’ heads and was able to separate from the victim enough to not feel conflicted as he saw the death. But seeing the demise of his friend at his own hands had unsettled him, no matter how deserved it was. Perhaps he had been rash. But all Will could remember at the time was the phantom burning ache he felt on his torso and the sting of betrayal that still resounded in his head. As he saw Hannibal’s body cooling on the kitchen floor, the overwhelming panic and guilt he had expected never came. He had liked killing Hannibal just as much as killing Hobbs. He felt light, relieved almost. There were no more dark edges in his mind, he was solely Will Graham. There was no Garret Jacob Hobbs whispering ‘see’ into his ear. His choices had been his own. His next choice had been to get all the blood off and borrow some clothes of Hannibal’s. He wouldn’t be needing them anyways.

Or so he thought, as he glanced at Hannibal. He appeared whole and hale, only the majority of his white shirt being stained red gave any rise to other conclusions. Whatever had happened to Will Graham had ultimately happened to Hannibal Lecter as well. Perhaps a truce was needed.

“I woke up starving. Even if this meat isn’t the beef you promised, it was still really good.” Will took his unused salad plate and piled it with slices of roast and potatoes. He had eaten all the carrots and parsnips. He even pushed over the unused salad fork and knife.

If Hannibal looked affronted that he was served dinner off of a salad plate, he didn’t show it. But Will knew. And it was strange that for some reason he felt closer to Hannibal. Some innate connection he had only ever felt with those he profiled. But then again, he had been profiling the Chesapeake Ripper. And if he was right, the Copycat Killer was one in the same. That kill was too perfectly gift wrapped for Will Graham; some strange killer practicum that helped him define the Minnesota Shrike. He supposed he should be thankful. But he had saved lives at the cost of a visual aid made from another. Will found that was too deeply philosophical for him to think about right now. Especially since he had, apparently, come back from the dead.

And, oh God, he just ate what he was 99% sure was a person. And it had tasted so good.

Will quickly looked to Hannibal. He seemed the same: normal and sophisticated. He had sat down to the right of Will and was cutting through his meat as delicately as ever.

“Do you think---that is…never mind, this is stupid,” Will blushed faintly as he looked down at his plate. He hated how easy it was to see his blush, even with the beard.

“Will, nothing you say to me will be stranger than the events of this night,” he ate a sliver of meat, “there’s no need to be embarrassed.” Hannibal gave a small smirk he ineffectually disguised with chewing.

Fucker. Will took a quick breath and returned Hannibal’s gaze. It was so much easier to look now. “I was going to say, do you think we’re zombies?”

Will Graham had never heard his almost-not-quite psychiatrist laugh. He had a vague recollection of a huffing chuckle, maybe. But a full on belly laugh, wide with teeth, he had never seen. Or heard for that matter. It was…refreshing. Perhaps Hannibal was an actual person after all and not a monster stuffed into a person suit.

The doctor took his time in laying his silverware down across his plate and dabbed at the corner of his right eye with a napkin. Had he actually put a napkin across his lap? What, to keep the blood stains clean?

“That is simple fantasy. What we have been given is a gift.” His eyes held steadily on Will. And the agent wasn’t compelled to look away. Oh. He saw perfectly now.

“You’re in love with me, or at least, you think you are.”

Hannibal smiled slowly. The tips of his teeth were visible on the edge of his bottom lip. “I know my mind quite well. There is no ‘thinking’ about it.”

Will closed his eyes and rubbed a hand against his temple, “If I had to be undead, of course I had to be stuck with you.”

“And that is where I think you are wrong dear Will,” Hannibal reached out and grasped the wrist of Will’s unoccupied hand, turning his own upwards to insure Will’s fingertips laid against his pulse point. “We are very much alive.”

Even if he was essentially holding hands with the man that had killed him, Will was still struck by the elegance of the argument. And if he thought Hannibal’s gentle warmth and steady heart beat was perfect in its pairing, his small smile said it enough.

Hannibal’s returning smile reflected the sentiment after he gave Will’s hand an affectionate squeeze. Will didn’t forget that the doctor held the hand of his own killer as well.

Will’s blush came back with a vengeance. Giving a small cough, he turned to look away, his gaze landing on that damn swan painting. He didn’t feel the need to remove his hand from Hannibal’s quite yet. Perhaps it was because the warmth helped ground him. He was not going to examine whatever clusterfuck of feelings he was experiencing. For now, he’d blame it on the blood loss. Oh, and all the fucking organs he lost.

“So, did you decide how you were going to eat me? Perhaps turn my liver into a *pâté*? Make up a nice protein scramble with my lungs for breakfast?” It was far easier for Will to channel his anger. Easier since it gave him something to hold onto. Other than Hannibal. Fuck.

When he tried to tug his hand out from Hannibal’s grasp, it was firmly held. The doctor had a vaguely chiding look on his face. “Now Will, turnabout is fair play. If you care to recall, you took your pound of flesh. But you spilled far more than a drop of blood.” Hannibal brought Will’s hand to his lips and gave a soft kiss to his knuckles. “Yet no harm done.”

Will had never observed Hannibal in any sort of seductive element. Frankly, he had never given it any thought; almost seeing him as asexual if he was perfectly honest. But if this was his version of flirting, Will knew he wasn’t going to survive. Not like he could die, but he knew any preservations he had about Hannibal were going to be slowly worn down. Would that be so bad though? They had both come back from the dead, seemingly for each other. Hannibal had come back for some kind of affection for Will. But Will knew he had returned for some sort of reckoning, which he had achieved. Essentially, the score was tied. And Will was unsure if he could win. He’d already lost his heart once to Hannibal. And as involuntary as that act was, he knew this would be much the same but perhaps more permanent.

“How about you change and I clean up your mess in the kitchen.”

“Your deflection is noted Will Graham, but I will not be thwarted,” Hannibal gave one last peck before he finally let Will’s hand go. “Let me help you. Many hands make light work.”

It was oddly domestic how they easily worked in tandem. Both gathered up the plates and platters off the dining table and returned to the kitchen. Hannibal momentarily paused in the hallway to glance at the pool of blood. Will moved around him, through the kitchen to the sink to rinse off and wash all the dishes from dinner.

Hannibal pulled out a large mop and bucket from a storage closet hidden in the hallway between kitchen and dining room. Will shouldn’t have been surprised at how efficient and quickly both rooms were mopped; the water turning murky and crimson when he was finished. Practice makes perfect he supposed. As the doctor moved to the doors that led to his backyard to empty the evidence of the night’s second murder, Will couldn’t help but ask, “Why not just dump it down the sink?”

Will was met with a smile as both mop and bucket were placed on the outside step, “The iron is good for my vegetable garden.” And left Will with the after image of his smile.

“Of course, even his vegetables eat people,” Will mumbled as he moved to the platter with leftover roast and potatoes.

He found some Tupperware containers, well, some really fancy plastic containers anyways, to put the leftovers away. He stacked them on a shelf in the fridge, when he couldn’t help but look around a bit. He didn’t see any fresh meat; there were assorted vegetables and other clear containers that held various sauces and prepared ingredients. But no meat. While he heard Hannibal turning on an outside facet to wash out his cleaning tools, Will opened the freezer.

There, on the top shelf, neatly sealed and packed, were his lungs, liver and heart. Bringing up a hand to quickly feel the reassuring beat of his heart, Will took large gulping breaths as he tried to reconcile that there were 2 sets of organs that were essentially his. But only one was where it belonged.

Will hadn't noticed that there were no other sounds besides his harsh breathing. A soft touch to his shoulder startled him enough to slam the freezer closed. He could feel himself shaking, in fear or rage, he couldn't tell anymore.

"I normally do not eat meat that was previously frozen. I have served it to my guests, but my heightened palette always notes off tones that I do not care to indulge. But with you…the sum of your parts was more than I was prepared to pay. And I could not quite find it within myself to part with these in the transitory act of food. Even your body---I did not know what I wanted to do with it other than pretend it wasn't there or find a way to repair such a heinous mistake."

"You find the whole more than the sum of its parts." Will glanced at Hannibal from the corner of his eye.

"I find the whole infinitely more enchanting. Especially how you took my life so effortlessly. It was as beautiful as any force of nature, unimpeded by mortal or moral obstacles." Hannibal's eyes burned bright in adoration, "You were righteous in your fury and graceful in execution. You did not look away from your actions and you continued to look as I passed. I died with peace that I did not die alone. You were benevolent to my own end."

"'To die by your side is such a heavenly way to die?'" Will couldn't help but retort back. Anything to try and throw Hannibal off enough for Will to gather the shreds of himself that still felt dissected and open before the doctor. He felt vulnerable and overcome by all the attention. Lately, he'd only been trapped in a strange sidestep of a 'will they won't they' with Alana. But to be the focus of true affection for no other reason than being himself, rather than despite himself…even when he had shown his worst, Will almost couldn't bear it.

"'To die by your side, well the pleasure, the privilege is mine.'" Hannibal quipped back. Of course he'd be a Smith's fan. His teenage self would have swooned.

Will canted his head, pressing his cheek to his shoulder and inadvertently against Hannibal's fingers. "Careful, you're getting too close to comparing me to divinity. We might have to keep a look out for lightening striking us down," he said in another attempt to deflect. He shouldn't have been as embarrassed as he was. Being praised by the victim for a lovely death was something he had never thought he'd ever experience. Will had always played with the idea that he would fall so deep into his mind that he would return full of the reflections of every killer he ever profiled. He had made peace with the idea he was a potential killer held back only by his force of will. But this…there was no word for this. It seemed almost as if Hannibal was taking his own murder as an answer to start courtship.

"We are gods of our own making. Let him strike, and I shall strike back."

That brought Will back to their present conversation. His eyes met Hannibal's and he was struck by the utter depth of emotion he saw.

“We have shed our mortal coils William through sheer force of will. We returned, whether it was in spite of or because of each other. We are irrevocably tied. I can think of nowhere else I’d rather be.” Hannibal’s thumb gently brushed against Will’s cheek.

Will felt boneless and weary. He quite honestly felt faint. Hannibal’s intensity could be nothing less than overwhelming. He leaned his head against the fridge door. His knees would have buckled if the ever present hand on his shoulder hadn’t pulled him against a torso he knew was covered in dried blood. Will should have felt indignant when he was turned around and pulled into a tight hug. But he hadn’t been held so tenderly since he was a child. He had seen Hannibal’s eyes and knew he fervently believed everything he said. There were no more manipulative overtures or human veils to hide behind. Hannibal had lost Will once, and refused to do so again, simple as that. And for the third time that night, Will Graham cried.

If disappointments needed expectation, then gratifications needed none at all.

Chapter End Notes

I've been trying to improve my writing. So, I've been thinking of doing some one shots. I'm pretty much open to anything. If you have an idea or a prompt at the kink meme, message me on tumblr. If I feel I can write it, I'll see what I can do :D

everett-harte.tumblr.com

# Folie à deux

Chapter Notes

Holy crap this chapter kicked my ass. There's a lot of character development in this and of course, they have to talk a lot. But I've finally laid the groundwork for Dark!Will (aww yiss).

There's some French in this. I tried my best with it. I'll post translations at the bottom, but most are easy to figure out on context.

Trigger Warnings: Graphic description of a child's death, preparing of human organs for consumption, cannibalism, a character eats a part of himself.

And it gets strangely sappy again. But hey, you should notice the title of this chapter ok?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was strange how cathartic a bit of a cry could be. Hannibal had held him for longer than Will would care to admit. The doctor gently ran his hands in comforting circles between his shoulder blades and whispered soft soothing words in a language he couldn't even understand. It was nice to be coddled, even if it was at the hands of the Ripper. Will had seen the absolute worse he could do: the savagery it took to rip out organs while the victim was still alive. Yet, in another life, he had been a surgeon. Hannibal was a dichotomy that Will couldn't fully place yet. He had understood the Ripper and Hannibal separately, but reconciling the two in his mind would take time. Especially when adding to the mix the love Hannibal apparently felt for him.

Pulling himself away, he took the time to wipe the back of his hand against his cheeks before a hand towel was used and did so more efficiently. Hannibal tossed it back onto the work table before cupping Will's face for a moment to find eye contact. What he saw must have placated him since he lightly patted one check and smiled that barely there smile.

"Now then William, since it is nearing breakfast hours, what would you care to eat? Perhaps a fruit salad and an omelet?"

Will startled and looked toward the kitchen window. Huh, it was morning. The sun was starting to peak over the horizon. How long had this fucking night lasted? At least it was Saturday. But that's probably why Hannibal had invited him over; a search for Will wouldn't have started until mid-week when he had missed several classes. Glancing back at the freezer, he made a quick decision.

"I'm actually pretty hungry. And I know you said you don't really like frozen meat, but maybe you can whip something up with it." Will couldn't help his nature to poke at the things that made him uncomfortable. And if he could surprise Hannibal again, it would be worth it.

Hannibal's eyes took on a fervent look and he patted Will's cheek on last time. He stepped away and moved toward the freezer, pulling out the heart. Will's heart.

"Would a breakfast hash be agreeable to you? Sautéed bell pepper, onion, and potatoes mixed with---"

"Me," Will huffed out.

Hannibal paused in his quick gathering of ingredients. He smirked, "I was going to say *coeur de Guillaume*, but you are succinct as ever." He collected the heart from the counter beside the fridge, before he walked over to his chopping block; holding several bell peppers in the crook of an arm.

"I speak French you know. And I had far too many teachers call me *Guillaume* to make me swoon over you saying my name in *la langue française*. Or do you want me to start calling you…hmm, I guess it would be *Annibal* huh? So *Annibal*---" He turned towards the chopping block to continue but paused.

It took Will only a moment to notice the unnatural stillness Hannibal carried; his ingredients laid out on the chopping block. He had braced his hands on the outer edges, his hands tight and knuckles white with strain. His head hung low and Will could tell he was making an effort to take deep measured breaths. The agent moved slowly until he was beside the doctor and awkwardly placed a hand on his shoulder. Comforting wasn't one of his strong suits, but he had never seen Hannibal lose his calm demeanor. He tried rubbing small circles but couldn't help but notice the stiff, flaky texture of the blood-stained shirt Hannibal still wore.

"I'm---I'm sorry Hannibal. Whatever I said, I didn't mean anything by it." Will vaguely recalled some advice his Dad had given him about women; always apologize even if you don't know what you did wrong. Hannibal was not remotely feminine in any way, but Will thought the advice was sound. It could be applied to whatever the hell he and Hannibal were now.

The stiff shoulders gradually loosened, his tight grip on the chopping block lessening, and a deep sigh was exhaled. He straightened, and looked firmly ahead. "It's nothing you could have known Will. But, my sister…she was younger than me and could never fully pronounce my name. She would call me 'Annibal."

"I didn't know you had a sister."

"Not anymore. She was murdered." The stiffness returned to Hannibal's frame.

Taking his hand off Hannibal's shoulder, Will moved around the chopping block until he stood in front of Hannibal's line of sight. For once, he avoided eye contact and focused beyond Will's shoulder to the wall behind. Will was unsure if this was going to be a smart move or if he wasn't more like Alana than he thought. Stuck alone in room together, perhaps he couldn't help himself but study the intelligent psychopath before him. But when Hannibal finally decided to meet his eyes, he felt grounded once again. This wasn't a chance to see how a monster was made; Will felt a greed build up in himself. This was a chance to fully take what was offered. He had uncovered one of Hannibal's greatest secrets, being the

Ripper. But he couldn't help but want everything. He wanted to know every secret and be the only one to know this man fully. Hannibal knew what he was offering the empath, and Will couldn't help but accept.

So Will forced himself to look and see. He looked past the deep brown eyes with a maroon sheen and delved as far as he could. His empathy had been compared to a form of telepathy and in the moment, he couldn't deny it certainly felt like it at times.

"Your parents, they died. And everything fell to you. You had to take care of your sister but there was no one to take care of you."

"Yes." Hannibal replied in wonder, his eyes burning bright.

"You tried so hard, but something catastrophic happened…it's what killed your parents. You and your sister were lucky to be alive but…" Will's posture changed. He unconsciously mirrored Hannibal's stance. "But, you were both only children. Someone…a group found you and took you in. You thought for a moment that you were going to finally be okay. Something changed though…something…"

"The winter got worse. The roads were snowed in and we were trapped on the mountain."

Will easily picked up where he left off, "The winter was the worst one that was ever seen, that ever was. It was so cold and you forgot what anything looked like without a coat of ice. Both of you got worse and worse…but you tried so hard. You thought if she could make it, it would be worth it. You accepted your death, but that's what made it so hard for you. You had never considered the possibility of hers. It shattered you, reformed you into something that was built to survive. You had to survive to avenge her."

Hannibal kept his hands at his sides, clenched tight. His eyes had hardened, not to block Will, but simply because he was immersed in the one memory he kept tightly locked. No one knew the full extent of his past, not even his beloved aunt. What use was a secret if you didn't tell someone?

"If you truly wish to know me, you must know how she died." Hannibal's hands unclenched as he held steady eye contact.

"I can see multiple possibilities all at once, but please…tell me." Will asked. He was in too deep within Hannibal's mind to be satisfied with nothing less than everything.

Hannibal rounded the chopping block and entered Will's personal space. He gently held Will's chin and tilted his head to the side, finally breaking eye contact. His thumb pressed against the fullness of Will's bottom lip, and he lightly stroked the edge. He brought his lips against Will's ear, the gentle curves catching his lips.

Hannibal whispered, "They smashed her head in and dragged her body outside. They skinned her and dismembered her until she resembled the meat you find at the butcher's. That's all they saw her as. And in the end, that's all I saw in them."

Will felt words that weren't his own leave his lips, "Pigs. Greedy things that are better off dead and serving a purpose; to provide nourishment when they brought nothing else to the world. They don't deserve to live if *She* wasn't able to." Will felt the fervor settling in the dark place of his mind he hadn't felt since he awoke in the basement. Another facet of the Ripper settled in and stayed.

A shudder rippled through Hannibal's frame before he turned Will's head sharply to the side and surged against him; he kissed hard and thorough. The hand that was on Will's chin had slipped behind his head, clenching firmly at the curls. The other gripped tightly at his hip, wrinkling the borrowed khakis.

The sun rose further as Will made-out with the Chesapeake Ripper and Hannibal, finally one in the same in his mind.

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They separated after an embarrassingly long time in Will's approximation. Trying to straighten his clothes out, he saw Hannibal's smug look as he all but prowled over to the sink to wash the bell peppers.

"Do you need any help?" Will couldn't help but feel useless as he stood in the middle of the kitchen. He was still feeling emotionally raw from connecting so fully with Hannibal. He needed something to do with his hands.

Hannibal smiled, "If you like, you could prepare the potatoes."

They moved again in that strange domestic tandem that they had displayed earlier. Hannibal pointed Will towards his pantry to retrieve several potatoes. He returned, placing the vegetables on the counter before he settled into a familiar rhythm of washing, peeling, and after finding a knife, dicing the potatoes. He looked to Hannibal in question and saw him finish chopping the bell peppers and onion. The doctor then pulled a pan out, drizzling oil before scooping the potatoes and onion in and placed it on the stove. Stirring them a bit, he left them in Will's care before moving to the chopping block. Will was intent on keeping the potatoes from burning; some strange pride wanting to show Hannibal that he wasn't completely hopeless in the kitchen. Turning to ask when to add the bell peppers, he noticed Hannibal was delicately slicing his heart in thin strips.

"Don't you need to defrost it first?" Will blurted out. He needed something else to focus on. If he concentrated on it as food, he could get through this.

The corner of Hannibal's mouth twitched, "Not necessarily. Freezing the meat for a period of time can make it more stable to achieve thinner cuts. Especially this particular piece of meat," his eyes sought Will's, "It's perfectly formed and exceedingly healthy making the muscle fibers tough to cut through." Cannibal compliments should not have made Will blush. But they did.

Hannibal smirked, knowing full well his words' effect. He took a moment to cut off the excess hang of pulmonary artery and vein, "The thinner slices will make it easier to sauté the meat and make each bite tender." He finished cutting the heart, leaving a neat pile. It wasn't so hard to look at now, it simply looked like strips of beef. But Will knew viscerally that it was something distinctly other and held onto the thought that this was his idea, his choice. If he had to eat his own heart to prove to himself that this night had happened, he would.

Another pan was pulled out and drizzled with oil to start sautéing the meat. Will took a moment to admire the effortless way Hannibal flipped the meat, quickly adding his seasonings, before his inattention was noticed. "You can add the bell peppers now dear Will. Add any seasonings you want, this is your creation," their eyes met and held until Hannibal returned his attention to flip the heart. "Do remember to keep stirring."

Will did as he was told, but his eyes kept flickering back to the meat. It was nicely browned, the edges curling slightly. Only a faint red was still visible in the center of each slice. The oil looked faintly pink with blood. His blood, his heart---as Hannibal said, his creation. He needed to focus. Potatoes, stir the potatoes.

Will added salt and pepper to his vegetables; he wasn't confident enough to try anything else in Hannibal's kitchen. His potatoes had crisped up and were finally soft. Content to continue stirring, he was startled when he felt two arms come from behind, one holding the pan with seared meat. Hannibal took the large spoon from Will's hand to slide the meat out into the vegetables. Setting aside his pan, he took to gently mixing the various ingredients, bracketing Will near the stove, torso flush with his back. He rested his chin on the shoulder provided, "Your potatoes came out quite well. I wouldn't be adverse to you helping me cook; either by preparing or providing."

He wasn't sure if Hannibal meant that as providing his own organs or going out and cutting them out of others. Will cared not to think on that as he stared down at his sautéed heart. He knew what it was, but it smelled so good. And really, it looked like any other meat. He could do this. But maybe he could change the topic of conversation.

"Why did you decide to eat this? Not only was it frozen, but it's from me. I don't necessarily fit your profile…or do you…did you think of me as a 'pig'?"

Hannibal moved away after he turned off the burner. He went about getting plates and by the time Will was fully prepared to apologize again, he was answered.

"What distinguishes you from the masses is like my sister…like Mischa, you're irreplaceable. I've found that when you ask, I feel as if I can deny you nothing. And there is an aspect of me that wants a piece of you, the sum of your parts, if I can never have the whole." He moved to put some of the breakfast hash on a plate. "The question you should ask yourself is why did you suggest we eat your heart?"

Will carefully wet his lips, taking a moment to gather his thoughts, "I've often found it's better for me to directly face what makes me uncomfortable. It's easier if I get it over with, like ripping off a band aid. Seeing it made this night all the more real. I needed to know this night happened, for my sanity. And part of me wanted to see your reaction."

Hannibal finished plating the rest of the hash, before moving to the fridge to retrieve a bowl of sliced fruit and a carafe of orange juice. When he returned and placed it neatly on the island, he turned and was sure to catch Will's eyes, "It's perfectly natural to test the parameters of a relationship, especially as ours has changed quite dramatically. However, we must discuss how you wish to proceed. I will abide by whatever decision you make; I will never speak of the incidents of this night if necessary."

"Do you mean the coming back from the dead or the making-out?"

The doctor gave one of those barely there smiles, "Both."

He took his time to answer again. "I'm not entirely certain how I feel. I understand you now, and maybe that's enough. No one has ever felt so strongly for me and that overwhelms me, but I wouldn't mind seeing where this goes." That was the best answer Will could give.

Hannibal's eyes looked glassy, "I would only ask for what you're willing to give. Often the most fulfilling of relationships are based on friendship and ours will be magnificent."

Feeling embarrassed with the level of adoration being leveled at him, Will decided to do what he did best. Deflect. "Okay, that's out of the way. Let's go eat before the food gets cold." Will pulled some glasses down from a cabinet and found some forks in a drawer. He gathered the carafe and left to the dining room. The sound of a chuckle followed him.

After laying out everything as best he could by memory from past dinners he'd had at Hannibal's, he took a moment to think. He was pretty sure he was dating the Chesapeake Ripper now. It didn't terrify him as much as it should. Perhaps delving deep into his mind brought Hannibal in sharp relief as a whole man rather than the professional aspect he simply had conversations with or the faceless intelligent psychopath Will only saw at crime scenes. Will knew he should care about the body count and the number of deaths that were sure to follow as Hannibal continued, but he couldn't find the strength to care. He was tired. He had always tried to make the right decisions and he had ended up as a tool that was used repeatedly until he was nearly broken. The whispers at the F.B.I. were getting louder in speculation of his instability. And any good he did was sensationalized and spun as 'a killer catching other killers' by Freddie fucking Lounds.

A soft kiss was placed on his cheek as Hannibal moved around him to lay out the laden plates and the bowl of fruit. The soft smile directed at Will was enough to settle his mind. He wanted this. He wanted Hannibal. And he was going to keep him.

He poured juice into a glass before he handed it to Hannibal, finger tips skimming across each other. He then moved to fill his own. As they sat in their respective chairs, Hannibal spoke, "*Bon appétit Guillaume*."

Taking a chance, but somehow knowing it was welcome, he replied, "*Merci Annibal*." Will then speared a piece of meat with his fork. Hannibal stilled and watched intently as Will took slow bites, memorizing the soft texture and perfect seasoning of his heart. Swallowing, Will spoke, "*C'est délicieux*."

Hannibal's answering grin was all teeth.

Chapter End Notes

Folie à deux - madness shared by two
Guillaume - A French Version of William. It's pronounced sorta like Gee-yom.
coeur de Guillaume - Heart of William, William's heart.
la langue française - the French language
Bon appétit Guillaume - literally 'good appetite William' but means 'enjoy your meal William'
Merci - Thank you
C'est délicieux - This is delicious

Next chapter should get interesting. Thank you for all the comments and kudos! <3

# To the beat of your heart...

Chapter Notes

Well, this is where things will start to get weird. But you'll get a sexy surprise next chapter (aww yiss).

Trigger Warnings: Graphic descriptions of death, vivisection, surgery, and organ harvesting. A character dictates and endures their own death.

And let me tell you, Hannibal is only going to be dead for like a hot second okay?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will finished his meal with gusto. The meat was something he had never tasted before; the seasoning light but savory at the same time. The night's events felt more visceral to Will. Faced with physical evidence that the impossible had occurred, coupled with a meal he had never made much less ate before, assured him this night was no hallucination. It also helped him fully settle the Hannibal as the Ripper in his mind. Knowing something and accepting it were two very different things. He felt normal for once. This must be what it was like for people every day. He didn't feel conflicted, and he for once wasn't struggling at controlling the train of his thoughts. There was no phantom Garret Jacob Hobbs in his periphery, smiling obscenely and looking with dead glazed eyes. Will was just a man having breakfast. And he felt content.

"Look, how about you go take a shower. You've been wearing a crime scene all night." Will moved, picking up their empty plates. "I'll clean up down here okay?" Will had the feeling that Hannibal would be reluctant to let him out of sight; whether because he wanted to reassure himself that Will still lived or some pragmatic part of himself that didn't want Will to leave before he figured out if he would turn him in or not. But how could Will even consider such a possibility? He knew now that the only way for him to have what he'd always wanted but had seemed out of grasp, was for him to be selfish for once. If he wanted to be cared for and have the most meaningful relationship ever offered to him, he'd have to protect Hannibal.

The doctor took a moment to consider, then nodded to Will in assent. "I'll only be a moment." He left the dining room, only stopping momentarily to give Will a quick peck that nonetheless left him flustered. Smirking, the doctor went upstairs and Will heard the shower turn on a moment later.

Will finished gathering the rest of the dishes and silverware before he headed to the kitchen and washed up. Even if he was only doing a chore he'd done hundreds of times over his life, he felt a bubble of happiness. He was sharing quiet domestic moments with someone else.

From making breakfast to now, Will had dramatically changed. He wasn't just a good person anymore, he was better.

He had finished putting away the last washed plate when he remembered his missing glasses. He had felt the familiar friendship resettle back into normalcy, even expanding into a greater understanding of each other. He was unsure if he wanted to break the comfortable rapport. But it had to be addressed. Will was going to go back to the room he had died in.

Will only managed to make it partway down the hall when he heard Hannibal coming down the stairs. He was casual, a white button-up and black slacks. His hair was still wet and lacked the typical styling it usually had. When he spotted Will, he smiled that soft smile that he'd been giving all night. It was some form of warm affection that Will wasn't entirely comfortable examining. But knowing it was there made him feel light.

"I was trying to find my glasses. Would they still be in the study? Or did you take them somewhere else?"

Hannibal's smile faltered momentarily before he slipped into his typical placidness. "They're in the study on my desk. Let's go fetch them." He turned and walked down the rest of the hall, Will a step behind.

Will knew logically that Hannibal had to have cleaned, especially if he wanted to get away with Will's murder. But seeing the large ornate rug gone made it real. "Where'd you hide the rug?"

The doctor had moved toward his desk, almost nearly in the same spot he had been when trying to calm Will down the night before. "I wrapped it in plastic and hid it in my basement. I planned to dispose of it by driving to an isolated area and burning it." He grabbed Will's glasses and held them out.

"Huh, I figured you'd be thorough. My condolences on losing that pricey rug." Will walked over and took his glasses back. He noted that they had been cleaned; the usual smudges on the lenses gone and not a speck of blood present. He placed them in his shirt pocket. "If you went to all that trouble to clean this room up, why'd you keep my glasses?"

"I could have easily said you left them after dinner. And I was feeling sentimental. If I had to lose you, I had this."

"You keep bringing that up. You wanted to keep a piece of me. You kept my organs frozen, you even kept my glasses as a memento. If you were so infatuated with me, why'd you kill me in the first place?"

"I may have known I had an infatuation with you, but I didn't want to acknowledge it. I had decided you were too much of a liability to my continued freedom and it would be best to kill you. It was a simple matter of the head against the heart. I am more prone to one over the other, as you can imagine. Your returned affections were only a possibility, I preferred something substantial."

Will didn't expect the sharp ache from the words he knew he would hear. Hannibal was calculating and exacting; these traits were the main reasons he hadn't been caught. It shouldn't have surprised him that Hannibal could kill someone he claimed to care for. He accepted Hannibal and wanted him, but this did nothing to silence the doubts rolling through his mind.

A hand rested on his shoulder, startling him from his thoughts turning inward. "Will, you have always said you work from evidence. Reconstruct this; you've already seen it from the victim's perspective, find mine."

"Of course. How much weirder can this day get. I'm dead, I'm alive, I killed you, you're alive. You know what, why not. How much worse can it get. Let me reconstruct my own murder." Will's voice had raised to a near yell. He pulled away from Hannibal and walked further into the room. He took a deep breath to calm himself down, and closed his eyes, attempting to concentrate solely on Hannibal.

The pendulum swings. "I'm a man that only appears as a man. Inside my seams, I'm holding a secret. My persona is finely crafted. No one suspects because I am a more perfect person than they are. But I am not a person, I am one that eats its own kind. I am a cannibal. I take the flesh of those unworthy of life because I want to. Because I can. I know there is no one to stop me. My veil is impenetrable. But there's someone new. Someone that is set in my path that is different yet tries so hard not to show it. This mind can see. This mind is dangerous. I know what I must do. But I wait. There are many people in the world but no mind is quite like this. I study it, I manipulate it. I kill to show this mind the depths of its own darkness. I see through to its core and find someone I could love. It is only fitting that my equal be as formidable as myself. Sentimentality is dangerous and I cannot gamble my freedom on a chance.

"The relationship has grown. It is easy to invite him over. He is unsuspecting and wholly trusting. The night must go perfectly, I would expect nothing less as his last night alive. If I could not allow him this life, his death will be beautiful. But plans change. That mind connected threads that should not have even been seen. He is agitated, he is angry. Seeing that anger, my sentimentality rises again. A strange compulsion urges me to try and salvage this. I do not need to kill him. I cannot help but try to diffuse his anger. I try to placate, I try to misdirect, but ultimately that brilliant mind has forced my hand. This night was to be the perfect last night for him and that's all I have left. I grab a scalpel off my desk. Even while accusing me of murder, he is still trusting that I won't hurt him. His mistake is my opportunity.

"I slip the scalpel through shirt and skin. A flick of my wrist drags it easily through both. For this is one of my favorite tools, and I take good care of my things. There is shock and anger, but the betrayal bothers me the most. It is the pain and tears that drive me to action. On others, this last moment is the loveliest; I enjoy the pain inflicted for my creations. But he will not be one. He is solely for me and his demise won't be seen by others. In this, I can grant him respite. In this, he will truly only be mine. I slit his throat, his suffering has ceased. But mine has only begun.

“There is no joy in taking these trophies. They are mine now, but not in a way I wanted. That mind is silent now, and my sentimentality has changed to regret. There was a chance and always a choice. I crafted the perfect night, yet only the end result was accomplished. It may have been what I created, but this was not what I ever wanted. This is my design.”

Will wobbled a bit as he found himself back to his mind. He gripped the armrest of one of the chairs before he eased himself into it. Hannibal stood off by the desk, for once quiet. The silence stretched on as Will bowed his head and rubbed his hands through his curls. He left them there, crossing his fingers and balancing his elbows on his knees.

“You need to understand why I couldn’t let this go. You premeditated my murder. I killed you half in a daze, only remembering how much you hurt me. The end results might have been the same, but the execution was far different. I needed to understand why you did this to me.”

“I would say that you now know fully why. You went far deeper than I even anticipated. You truly have a gift.”

“So I was right? God, your mind is exhausting. There’s too much happening at once. You were the Copy Cat weren’t you?” Will sat up more and sprawled in the chair. Hannibal moved and finally sat in the adjacent chair.

“Yes. I wanted to see how your mind reacted to an inverse of a crime scene.” He half turned toward Will, “Did understanding my motives help? I would not begrudge you if you had second thoughts on pursuing this new relationship.”

“I know you better now. It’s like we have no secrets at this point. And for the night to turn so different from what happened… I guess I’m saying if we both came back it was for something. I’ve had doubts, and I still might, but I meant what I said,” Will turned his head toward Hannibal, “I want to see where this goes.” He reached out and grabbed the doctor’s hand, sliding down until both their fingers were entangled.

Hannibal looked pleased, glancing down at their hands. He paused, then appeared contemplative. “There is one thing I should divulge.” He tightened his grip on Will’s fingers. “When you returned, I was not entirely sure it was you. My sense of smell is very keen and your aftershave convinced me. Yet there was a sweet, burning scent that you were lacking.”

Will sat straighter, his body held rigidly, “What exactly do you mean ‘burning scent’?”

“I mean that I have suspected you have been suffering from encephalitis. You’ve had a continuous scent of fever; your hallucinations and lost time could have been considered symptoms of infection.”

“Unbelievable. Were you ever going to tell me? Maybe when I thought I was losing my mind? Fuck Hannibal. Let go.” He tried dragging his fingers out of Hannibal’s grip. Why did he even try to be affectionate if it was used against him?

“I would appreciate it if you listened to me William,” his grip remained firm. “We have already established that I liked to observe you. This offered me an opportunity to observe your mind under duress.” He lifted Will’s hand up, still struggling against Hannibal’s hold,

and kissed the back of it. “And yet you persevered and were just as brilliant with your own body working against you.”

“I don’t need fucking compliments. Especially about how impressive I was with a boiling brain. Thanks a lot Doctor.” He finally managed to pull his hand away and fought off the childish urge to wipe the back on his pants.

Hannibal sighed, “I also believe you are missing the point. You had a bacterial infection that is not simply fought off by the immune system. You would have needed to be admitted to a hospital for full treatment. Yet you do not appear to have it anymore. This is a clue to what could have happened last night.”

That caught Will’s attention. He set aside his anger for the moment, “So we’re finally going to talk about it?”

“Yes. I believe we should take advantage of this weekend we have available to us before we have to keep up our professional appearances.”

Will sat on the edge of his seat, finally excited to discuss what had been on his mind since he woke up. “What if we’re zombies? Okay, look, I know it sounds really out there. But under these circumstances, I say we don’t know rule anything out fully. We are literally at a point of ‘infinite diversity in infinite combinations’.”

“That’s a rather eloquent way of putting it. I can concede that we do not fully know the full extent of our circumstances, but I simply refuse to consider we are zombies. Especially since the mythos is rather contradictory and heavily dictated by film.”

“My eloquent way of putting it was from Star Trek. But to rule out zombies, we’re going to have to go down a checklist. Maybe we’re still alive in the sense that our hearts are beating and we still have a normal temperature. And we’re still cognizant and have full motor skills. But we’ve been eating people. The breakfast, the roast…I was starving and it was there, but it was quite possibly the best roast I’d ever eaten. Can’t that be a check on ‘taste for human flesh’?”

“If we’re going through checklists, you always say my cooking is the best you’ve ever eaten. The ravenous hunger could be explained by your body needing to replenish itself after replacing so many organs. Many victims of blood loss often describe having an extreme thirst that is the body’s way of acquiring more fluids. And to be frank, it has always been people and you have always polished off your plate. Yet you ate quite an amount of vegetables last night as well. I did not get a single carrot.”

“Alright, zombies are off the table. For now.” Will didn’t know why, but because the possibilities were truly endless, he felt an excitement he hadn’t felt since he was a child. This was an honest to God mystery.

“I believe we should focus our efforts on the extent of this gift. If we gather data, we can cut down our list of possibilities. We should try to answer why has your encephalitis cleared up? Is it only after death that we are fully healed or is it any wound? Is it infinite in attempts?

Will we continue to age? At this point, all we can do is try to solve an illogical problem in a logical manner."

Will huffed out a laugh, "You just want to experiment don't you?"

"You know me far too well."

"But we're going to come back to this discussion. Wait---do you think we're wendigos?"

"As I said, a discussion left for another time." That time Will was given full on side eye. Hannibal stood, "Now then, I know the perfect place for us to work."

Will wasn't sure what Hannibal wanted to do, but he had a feeling he knew where they were going. But that bubble of excitement wouldn't be quelled, and truthfully, he was curious as well.

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They went back to Hannibal's basement. Through the wine cellar, into his kill room. Or what Will assumed was. He hadn't remembered much from waking up here. It had been dark, the steel table cold on his back, and he had felt a faint burning in his chest. He was frankly surprised he had made it out, or even up those stairs.

"I assume you are remembering your last visit here." Hannibal moved to turn on the lights and Will could finally see the hanging plastic, the chains. There was that table, sitting center of the concrete, placed strategically above a drain. There were dried blood stains on the edges of the table, faint rivulets streaked down the legs drying in streaks toward the drain. Will thought he'd have tracked the blood through the room, but there were no footprints.

"I was. But now I'm wondering how long it took me to come back. The blood was completely dry before I walked out. Look, there's no footprints."

Hannibal did look around the room and hummed in agreement. "I'm uncertain, but it may have been around 3 hours," he smirked, "I remember since you came back around midnight."

"Witching hour?"

"Perhaps. How long do you suppose it took me to come back?"

"Mmm, about an hour. I took a shower and had just finished eating."

"Then we can assume the duration is equivalent to the damage rendered. That will be useful."

Hannibal moved to some cabinets on the side of the room. Will could hear him pulling things out.

“And how exactly will that be useful Hannibal?”

He returned with a large plastic case that he placed on a nearby surgical cart. Hannibal gave one of those barely there smirks as he opened the case. It was a fucking game processing kit. The kind hunters took with them on trips to quickly skin and butcher their kills. There was a large bone saw, a cleaver, with several skinning and boning knives.

Will laughed, “The kit for the cannibal on-the-go right? So, let me guess, you want to try and cut me open again?” He laughed again, “Good luck with that.”

Hannibal appeared serious again. “No my dear Will. As this is an experiment, one that we are unsure of the outcome, I will volunteer. I want you to cut and remove the same organs I had from you. We’ll compare the recovery times.” He moved to unbutton his shirt, starting at the cuffs, then moving to the front.

“Wait, what? Why? That goes against every survival instinct you’ve displayed this far! You were willing to kill me to stay free. Why…why would you even suggest this?” Will was at a loss. Hannibal had never been anything beyond self-serving, only doing enough to ensure others viewed him as a model citizen.

Hannibal folded his shirt and placed it on a side counter. He hoisted himself on the surgical table, sitting with his legs dangling above the floor. “If this doesn’t work as we hope it does, I may not come back at all. I will take this risk. If I die, it is only the Chesapeake Ripper that has disappeared, not an agent that has caught the worst humanity has to offer.”

“But, I don’t even know what to do. I can’t cut you open. I only killed you by stabbing you once, not performing a vivisection!” Will felt on the verge of hyperventilation. When he thought of experimentation, he thought they were going to make small cuts on their arms and see if they healed. Or even examine a blood sample. Not this.

Hannibal smirked, “Well then, it is quite lucky for you that I am a trained surgeon. I’ll guide you through this, all you have to do is follow my instructions. We need to know more, and I have full faith in you.” He pulled his legs up and laid himself out on the table.

“And William. If you want a more definitive answer; I couldn’t bear being your killer again. And if you did not come back…I do not think I would want to either.”

Well, fuck. “Are you sure? It’s going to hurt, even when I came back, I could feel a phantom pain.”

“Yes. Now then---”

“I want to use a scalpel, like you used.” If he was going to do this, he wanted to mirror Hannibal as close as possible. He rolled up the sleeves of his borrowed button-up.

Hannibal turned his head and met his eyes, “There’s several in the first drawer on the cart. Choose one to your liking.”

Will picked one with a medium looking blade, he wasn't confident that he would be able to handle the more delicate looking ones. He went up to the side of the table, and looked down at Hannibal.

"Should I disinfect your chest or umm, wash my hands?"

"This is going to be an impromptu surgery and since we've established that it appears infections do not persist after revival, I think we can forgo them."

"Logical I suppose." Will felt more confidant. Hannibal seemed to believe this wasn't a one-time occurrence. He could do this. Because like it or not, they needed answers before this became an issue later on.

"Now, feel for the sternum. When you find the bone, leave a hand there, and take your blade to underneath my shoulder. Cut at an angle toward the sternum and stop."

Will did as he was told, making as straight a cut as he could. Blood welled up and beaded along the line. For his part, Hannibal didn't make a sound.

"Did it hurt? If it gets too much, just let me know."

"Surprisingly not as badly as I anticipated. Now cut from the other shoulder and meet both incisions to the sternum in a 'v' shape."

Will's hand felt steadier. The skin was easy to cut through and the amount of blood so far was fairly minimal.

"You're going to cut down from the bottom of the 'v' shape to just below my navel. But be careful not to cut too deep. If you puncture the stomach, it'll get quite messy."

He placed a steadying hand on Hannibal's stomach as he slid the blade lightly through the skin. The blood flow seemed higher, or maybe it was the large cuts finally pulling apart that allowed it to pour out.

Hannibal retained his calm look. "You'll need the bone saw for this, it's in the kit. Cut through the sternum, we'll need to open up the ribs to get to a majority of the organs."

He placed the scalpel down on the table before he went to grab the saw. It looked like a fine-toothed hack saw; the rectangular shape feeling heavy in his hand.

Will moved back to Hannibal, "I'm going to start now. Remember, if it gets to be too much, let me know." Hannibal nodded, and looked straight to the ceiling. Will peeled the skin and muscle back, exposing the white lines of ribs. Feeling he could get better leverage, he moved to behind Hannibal's head and set the edge of the saw at the bottom of ribs, cutting through the sternum. One set tilted to the side; he thought it was good enough.

Hannibal was breathing shallowly, "That object that looks like 2 y-shapes connected is the rib spreader; it's in the kit. Put one notch against one side of ribs, then the other notch on the other side. Push down hard to lock the spreader's joint in place."

Will took the bone saw back and grabbed the strange device. It was indeed ‘y’ shaped, hinged together at the bottom with a screw. Both shapes overlapped until they were opened. He started to walk toward the table when he paused to look at Hannibal. He was panting lightly, his torso splayed open. Blood was running down his sliced edges, the drain on the floor collecting it all. Will wasn’t sure how to feel at this moment. This was undoubtedly a sight Hannibal had seen multiple times with his many victims; even Will must have looked like this. But, he could feel the ache, what must be the feeling of unease Hannibal had felt when he did this just last night. He needed to finish, they needed answers and he couldn’t leave Hannibal half-way finished.

He went beside Hannibal and placed the notches against each side of the rib cage, pushing down to lock the joint. There was a multitude of snapping sounds; tendons and ligaments stretching. But oh, the unobstructed view was something else. The organs glistened and contracted in their rhythms. This was life, and Will was humbled that Hannibal trusted him in this.

“There will appear to be a large white membrane above the stomach. This is the diaphragm, cut through the edges along the rib cage to release the compaction of the chest cavity’s organs.” Hannibal was speaking shallowly, his breathing was slowing.

Will found the membrane and slipped the scalpel along the edge of the rib cage, slicing it. The organs above it seemed to collapse downward. Hannibal’s heart was more easily visible, its beats steady. The lungs however were barely expanding.

“Here you need to find the esophagus, and cut it to release the lungs. Often, all the organs will start to come out as one is cut out. You need to take the heart, lungs, and liver. Take the blade and cut the surrounding arteries and veins. I will die, make sure you note the time dear Will,” Hannibal panted out.

Will took the scalpel in hand. “I’ll see you soon Hannibal.” He had to finish. If Hannibal had been strong enough to dictate his own death, then he could assure that his wishes were followed. Will hoped he came back, he didn’t know if he could live with the guilt this time.

He reached into the chest cavity and took hold of the esophagus. Hannibal gave a wheezy gasp as he squeezed it and slid the scalpel through. The lungs seemed to slide down, dragging along the slowing heart, sagging against the liver. Will was quick, he didn’t want to prolong this. He cut the major connections between organs, and pulled out the lungs and heart in a neat bundle. They were warm, and Will felt the faint shudder run through the heart with its last beat. He had to focus, he needed to finish this. He found a stainless steel bowl on a counter and placed both organs in, setting it on the edge of the surgical table. The chest cavity was empty, a pool of blood had settled in the bottom. Taking a breath, Will finished cutting out the liver, taking care to not cut through the stomach. Putting it in the bowl, he looked at his watch, it was 5:04 in the morning.

He wasn’t sure what to do with the organs, but decided the large freezer would be best. Will just put the whole bowl in, not wanting to be away too long. He checked on Hannibal and saw he was still lifeless, his skin tone changing to a grey color as the blood settled in his back. The ribs were still splayed open so Will popped the spreader off. At 5:15, he decided to

be a bit productive and went about cleaning off all the tools he had used. He finally washed the blood off his hands and forearms.

At 5:45 AM, Will started to get worried. Maybe he had killed the doctor after all.

Well, fuck.

Chapter End Notes

I swear I'm not a serial killer! I really wanted Hannibal to give Will a practicum in err, serial killing? Or at least his style of killing. I had to do a lot of research for this. I based it off of hunting videos, the ones where they butcher deer or do field dressing. I was so not going to look up surgical videos. The deer videos were sorta intense though lol. So please excuse anatomy discrepancies, I did base this after deer. But I guess it's fitting (swiggity-swag)?

Thank you for all your comments, kudos, bookmarks and subscriptions! I never thought this weird little story would get so much love!

# I find my rhythm

Chapter Notes

> This chapter got really long, I had to cut it in half. And honestly, I wanted to get it out to you <3
>
> Warnings: Some blood, another character death. But they come back in a hot second.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal could easily sympathize with Will's dilemma. If he wasn't as secure in his mind as he was, there would be no doubt that this had been some psychotic break. But of all circumstances and situations he had preconceived, none had come close to what had actually happened. Yet, none could have been more perfect. William knew who he was and each horrific aspect he was capable of. It hadn't gone particularly smoothly, but if he was honest with himself, if it had, that would have worried him. Will was as close to an epitome of virtue as Hannibal had seen, any corruption would be slow. He had to work gradually, but be completely honest; Will's empathy would pick apart anything less.

The night had gone very different from what he had anticipated. But he could say that when he woke on the floor of his kitchen, that heavy weight he had always carried felt lighter. His darkness was a tangible thing that writhed and coiled in wait until he lifted his human veil. It was tiring at times to truly be something and never have the opportunity to share it with anyone other than in their last moments of life. But Hannibal woke to fresh opportunities and possibilities. He wasn't sure why they had come back, but the arrogant part of him thought they deserved it. Both he and Will had taken back their lives through their own means; their lives had been fully in their control. And Hannibal so did enjoy when he was fully in control.

He started slow, easing Will into a familiarity that was common in their friendship. Will's apparent acceptance wasn't easy, but nothing was ever easy with the agent. Hannibal knew he had to strike quick to ensure an idea settled into Will's mind. He may have used tactics that he would deem as simply seductive, but they weren't any less truthful. The shock and embarrassment from Will whenever he was the object of his affections was both charming and maddening. Will was lovely in form and mind; the fact no one else appreciated his beauty irritated the doctor. But, he supposed if anyone else did, he would have to kill them.

Hannibal had known Will had a gift; a tremendous gift that helped the F.B.I catch its monsters of the week. But to take the brunt of it full force was like trying to endure drowning. When Will had spoken his name so innocently in a form he hadn't heard for over 30 years; he had collapsed into his mind, trying to pull himself back to the surface for breath. Sweet Will had tried so hard but was utterly hopeless at comforting. But the thought was appreciated nonetheless. But oh, when he had looked into his eyes willingly, purposely, Hannibal knew he would be found again. Will was effortless and dug deep to pull Hannibal

back from a memory too long repressed. He knew that Will only used his ability when he felt he needed to but took no joy from it; but the willingness he showed to sink into his murderous mind touched Hannibal deeply.

*'For I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil: for thou art with me.'*

There was no death in their horizon other than that which they doled out to the unworthy. Dear Will had no reason to fear anymore; Hannibal always took great care with his precious possessions. And neither would never walk alone again.

He had much to be thankful for, a feeling he wasn't familiar with. Second chances were something that he had given up as bright lies that were spread as gossip to give people hope. His patients were often given this same hope by himself if only to keep them returning to appointments to explore their banal minds. This was something else entirely, heady and lush, as Will's scent was without the sweet fever to temper it. He had forgotten it in his excitement at new entertainment. He was resolved to not miss any nuance of Will ever again.

But that true moment of beauty was when Will devoured his former self. He ate the heart of the agent that was horrified by the truth and emerged as something infinitely more than the sum of his parts. He was *Guillaume* and would be his*Vilhelmas* in due time. One mustn't rush perfection after all. He simply wouldn't be Will if he didn't question everything. Perhaps in that, they were the most similar, having a natural curiosity that they couldn't help but appease; Will by solving impossible crimes and Hannibal by creating situations to observe. Both took their satisfaction from a job well done.

Hannibal had been reluctant in leaving Will after their breakfast. There wasn't any other reason beyond an intense greed to soak up every moment he could granted by their second chance. The doubt that flickered over Will's face firmed his resolve; Hannibal Lecter would make this second life worth it.

The glasses had been a non-issue until the moment they were. Being reminded of their existence had made Hannibal think of the moment he was rolling up the rug and nearly stepping on the frames. He had paused and noted the blood splatter across the lenses. He had taken far too much time in cleaning, polishing, and holding Will's glasses until he forced himself to put them down and finish his task. The tension held in Will's shoulders showed he was returning to the moment of his death and no amount of careful seduction was going to calm his fears. Will may have understood Hannibal, but he was still clinging to his previous life for stability.

The recreation was nothing less than spectacular. Will's gift was indeed pointed on both ends and firmly drove head on into Hannibal's motives and apprehension. If Will was allowed doubt in Hannibal's intensions, than the doctor was allowed doubts on his own decision making. But in his most recent choice to pursue Will unabashedly, he was nothing less than sure. It was tiring to keep returning to moments he wished he could move past quickly to fully pursue Will at his own discretion. There was an argument for patience that Hannibal always felt he was firmly on the side for. But he couldn't help but be impatient when something he thought he would never have laid before him. If nothing else, Will could feel

Hannibal's regard pulse in his mind for the brief moment his empathy fully connected. It was enough for now.

The true prize laid ahead. Will as a partner was an idea he had thought too outrageous to fully entertain, but in the soft moments between sleep and waking, he felt it could be the loveliest thing he ever had the potential to see. Hannibal felt an overflowing of happiness he had never experienced, in fact, such happiness had never occurred to him before. He only knew the best way to ensure Will's continued development was to push him into a place he felt secure and safe. He intended that be solely with him. Yet one last piece came into play. Will needed to feel secure as a predator as well. And who better to teach him than the Chesapeake Ripper?

Hannibal's scientific curiosity was indeed piqued by their new circumstances, but any other number of tests could be done. The doctor however, saw the bright opportunity to turn it into a learning experience for his dear Will. He thought that even if Will could place himself in the minds of killers, he still lacked the practical knowledge of how killing was done. Seeing a body without organs was far different than understanding how to cut them out. Hannibal could imagine a frustrated Will making mistakes that could lead him to being caught or worse, completely ruining the meat. And Hannibal was a great teacher; his body would be the perfect practice victim. If nothing else, his gesture would endear himself to Will more. The fact that it was made completely earnestly was quite a first for Hannibal, but didn't ruin the moment for him.

Because oh, what a moment it was. Will's protests were sweet but unnecessary. Hannibal's expectations were completely shattered by the first cut. Will's look of intense concentration was delightful. How easily he followed instruction, what care he showed sliding the scalpel through skin and flesh. His Will would be a most beautiful killer, deadly and precise. What distracted Hannibal from this sight, had been the fact that his organ harvesting hadn't been nearly as painful as his stabbing had been. If he was correct, perhaps their new bodies were building up a tolerance to pain. Interesting.

But these were thoughts to be discussed with Will. Hannibal felt the layers of unconsciousness lift.

Hannibal woke up from the dead once again.

*****

The first thing Hannibal noticed was the cold steel table beneath him. The next was the last few words of a conversation Will was having.

"Sorry for calling so early. Thanks again."

Hannibal was slightly miffed if he was honest. He carefully opened his eyes, and sought out Will. He was sitting on the floor, staring intently at Hannibal, a cell phone in hand. Hannibal

eased his legs over the table, carefully easing the kinks out from laying still for so long. He rubbed at his neck before bracing both hands on the edge of the table.

“You’re awake. How’re you feeling?” Will retained a wide-eyed look about him that momentarily distracted Hannibal. He had been worried. Will stood and walked slowly toward the table.

“I feel fine. How long did it take this time?”

Will appeared lost in his head for a moment before he finally came up beside the table and rested a hand on it. “It was almost an hour and a half.”

Hannibal hummed, “So the recovery time halved. I think we should also add that when you were performing the procedure, the pain was considerably less than the stabbing. It was tolerable. Perhaps with continued exposure and repetition, our bodies are learning their new parameters.” He was startled when Will placed his hand on his wrist, taking and measuring his pulse.

He wet his lips in a most distracting manner before he spoke, “Hannibal…it was amazing. Your chest closed up---like a venus fly trap. The cut was just gone. But then, you took a breath and I felt like I could finally breathe again,” He made eye contact, “I’m just happy you’re back.” He squeezed the doctor’s wrist before he made to let go.

Will would not get away quite so easily. Hannibal turned his hand in the hold to grasp the agent’s wrist, tugging him between his legs. “Dear Will, that is quite lovely to hear. Now I would like to ask who you called.” Hannibal kept his hand firmly on Will’s wrist, eying the cell phone held in the other.

He was startled by a laugh. Will chuckled a bit, “Oh, no, don’t even worry about that. I just had to call Alana to take care of my dogs for the weekend. My regular dog sitter is pretty booked on weekends.”

Hannibal stiffened at the thought of Will continuing to interact with his former student. A former student that often kept herself away from Will to not act inappropriately, whether professionally or personally. He was pulled from his thoughts by Will crowding towards him, kissing him on the cheek, “Hey, don’t think like that. I meant what I said. Okay?”

The doctor was settled once more, and Will took the moment to pull his hand away from Hannibal’s and place his cell in the upturned hand. He moved away to the still open game processing kit and took out a long boning knife. Turning to meet Hannibal’s eyes he simply said, “Do note the time,” before he plunged said knife into his own chest. Hannibal was baffled and froze as he saw Will’s body crumble to the floor. He quickly reacted, kneeling besides Will as he gasped and spit up blood. Will still had the sense to pull the knife out to hasten his death before tossing it to the side. He kept eye contact with Hannibal as he struggled to breathe. He nodded his head toward the phone before his head lulled to the side in death.

Hannibal was quick to glance at the time on the screen before he glanced back at Will’s body.

Will Graham died at 6:51 in the morning.

Rather rude to die in the middle of a conversation, Hannibal thought.

*****

Hannibal spent longer than he would like to admit staring at Will's body; staring at his stark paleness and stillness. But he quickly thought up a plan. He buttoned his shirt back on and went about finding plastic sheeting. He carefully rolled Will off the large blood puddle and wrapped him in it. He then carried Will up the stairs, pushing down the memory of the inverse, before he headed to the kitchen.

Will was placed in the chair in the corner of his kitchen. Hannibal tucked the cell back into Will's pant pocket as he straightened out the plastic to lay across the chair. Feeling satisfied his furniture was safe from blood stains, he set to work. Hannibal was feeling absolutely famished and he didn't doubt Will would be when he woke. He set about pulling Will's lungs from the freezer and letting them defrost a bit before he was struck with the most marvelous idea. He glanced at the clock on his oven then over to Will, before he sprinted to his basement freezer. Knowing Will, he just put his prizes away haphazardly before staring intently at the body before him. Hannibal wondered if Will had planned out what to do with his body if he wasn't revived. The idea of that shouldn't have sent his blood as hot as it did.

Hannibal returned with the bowl of his organs and noted Will was still slumped in his chair, gray and limp. Having full faith in his agent, he set to work vacuum sealing his own heart and liver, leaving his set of lungs out. Both sets of their lungs would be used in the first dish Hannibal had served Will: a protein scramble. He glanced at the oven clock and saw he would probably have enough time to finish it and make coffee. He set to work massaging the lungs and removing excess air, or in the case of Will's more frozen ones, making them more pliable. He took his favorite knife and started cutting their lungs into strips. How simply divine; their flesh would be cooked together and devoured together, indiscernible from where one started and the other ended.

*****

Will's revival occurred in stages. It was hard to see the skin knit back together through the blood stains and his ruined shirt. But Hannibal noted the flushed color of fresh blood illuminate the formerly grey skin. It wasn't long before he detected a shallow rise and fall of Will's chest. He started the coffee brewing and knew it would be done before Will fully awoke. He stirred the lung, turning it down as he set to scramble eggs in another pan. Hannibal smiled as he heard a deep breath and saw Will stretch as if he had simply fallen asleep in the chair.

"Mmm, how long was it?" he asked. He was startled by the crinkling of plastic on the chair, and the fact that he was in a chair at all. "And wow, you're more like Dexter than I would have thought."

Hannibal double-checked the time, “It was 34 minutes,” he smiled, “We’ve established the recovery rates are improving. I would safely say they are halving with each death. How was your pain level?”

Will plucked at the shirt, pulling it free from sticking to his skin, dried blood flaking off his shirt. “It happened really fast, but compared to when you killed me, this…actually didn’t hurt too badly. Huh. I’m sure I hit my heart; I felt it. Weird.”

He looked contemplative, “Did you dream? Or, well, I guess that’s the only way to describe it.”

Hannibal had just started to fold the lungs into the eggs. He finished and stirred them together, “I mostly revisited my memories. And you dear Will?”

“I don’t remember really, just something dark; or just darkness? But then I remembered our conversation in the study, before…everything. About the Copy Cat. We were talking about how there were reported sightings of Nicholas Boyle, and Jack wanted to close the case. But now,” he wet his lips in that distracting manner, “Now I know it’s you as well. But how… Marissa Schurr had his blood? Did you kill him?” He met the doctor’s eyes, eyes bright in their new revelation.

Will was always exceptional. But in this, he knew he would have to be honest, no matter how much it would hurt his agent. He had been so hopeful and dedicated to someone he saw that needed help. But much like his strays, Will had to know he couldn’t save them all. Some simply didn’t want to be saved. Hannibal took a moment to start plating their apparent second breakfast.

“Nicholas Boyle is dead but it was not by my hand. I simply aided in hiding the body from discovery.”

That caught Will off-guard. He stood from the chair and would have rather dramatically strode toward the kitchen island, if the plastic sheeting hadn’t stuck to his back.

“God fucking damn it,” Will mumbled as he tried to hastily rip the plastic off.

Hannibal merely smirked and moved to take both plates to the dining room. “Could you bring the coffee dear Will? I believe we’ll be needing it for this conversation,” and he simply left toward the hall.

*****

“You’re damn right we’re having this conversation! Fuck this plastic!” In his haste, Will had managed to shred the plastic instead of completely peeling it off. He tugged off the remaining strips before he went over to Hannibal’s stainless steel monstrosity of a coffee machine. He found those small glass cups Hannibal used and went about getting their coffee. It gave him

some time to cool down and not just yell at Hannibal. At least, for once he wasn't the killer. But then, who was? A small part of Will felt an irrational resentment. Who commanded enough loyalty or consideration from Hannibal to cue his protective actions? Will's simmering anger was coming back. He took their coffee out to the dining room.

He found Hannibal sitting at the head of the table, waiting patiently. Will placed both cups down before he took the seat to the right of Hannibal. He was starving, and the protein scramble looked every bit as good as it had the cold Minnesota morning when he still saw Hannibal as an inconvenience. But he would not be deterred.

"Now, please explain to me exactly what you meant. If you didn't kill him who did? And why did you help the killer?" Will was sick of Hannibal always dancing around a subject and wanted direct answers.

Hannibal responded by taking a sip of coffee. Will felt his face redden in his agitation.

"There is no true delicate way of putting this, but it was Abigail. She stabbed Nicholas during the altercation at her house; he did not escape as we had previously stated."

"And Alana? Was she in on it too?" This was just getting better and better wasn't it?

Hannibal chuckled, "No, not at all. She proved to be a hiccup in the plan. I was in fact the one to knock her out, not the maligned Nicholas Boyle." He then proceeded to eat, as if setting someone up for multiple murders was a daily occurrence.

This was probably the reason why Abigail was so much warmer to Hannibal than him, but it didn't help with the sting of hurt. Will may have killed her father, but her father had been trying to kill her at the time. Will didn't want gratitude or forgiveness, just a human connection between 2 people that suffered through the same trauma. And maybe Will thought he could help her, but she evidently had enough help already. But that small resentful part of himself couldn't help but think, why was Hannibal intent on helping her when he had decided to kill Will instead of treat his encephalitis?

Will pushed away from the table, "You know what, I can't even talk to you right now. I can't even fucking look at you right now without wanting to punch you." He stood and made to leave.

Unfortunately, he had forgotten how quick Hannibal was. He came up behind Will and put him in a loose, but no less effective choke-hold.

"Dear Will, what appears to be the problem? You already know I am a killer, what's one more body?"

This asshole didn't get it. And maybe Will was being unfair; not everyone had his level of empathy, but Hannibal was a fucking psychiatrist, you think he would understand Will better by now.

"It's not about the fucking body! It's about you treating me and Abigail differently in similar situations! Why were you so quick to help her when you didn't do the same for me? You

helped her hide a body when you couldn't fucking act like a medical doctor I know you were and let me know I had a disease eating away at my brain? You killed me before you even considered treating me!" He gave a sharp tug to the arm around his neck, unsurprised when it didn't move.

Hannibal sighed, "Is that all this is about? Will, don't waste anymore thought on this, such paltry things are not worthy of your time. Did you know Will that Jack Crawford is not completely blind? In fact, his assessment that Abigail was involved with her father's crimes was entirely true."

Will stiffened and turned his head in an attempt to catch Hannibal's eye, "W-what?"

"Yes. She was the lure the reeled all those girls in, straight to the man that would be their murderer. She has shown a remarkable survival instinct, displaying little care for the lives of others as long as hers was safe. I wanted to push that, see how far she could bend before she broke," Will could see that too sharp smile once again, "And she is breaking so beautifully right now. If you like, I will kill her for you and bring you her heart."

Will could sense the complete earnestness in Hannibal's offer. He was still trying to reconcile that Abigail was not an entirely helpless victim. She had been active in the murders that had haunted Will. And he hadn't even seen it; her mask was perfect. She was quite possibly an intelligent psychopath, much like he had classified the Copy Cat. She was dangerous. He had already seen how attached Alana was to her, how Abigail had incurred her sympathy, she hurt himself systematically with sharp rebuffs, and how she appeared to adore Hannibal. Perhaps she thought she had some control over him now that he had helped her in her time of need. But she didn't have anything of the sort, Will did.

Hannibal broke his thoughts by sniffing delicately along his hairline, nosing at his temple, "As for why I didn't let you know about the encephalitis, I liked observing you. You were just as brilliant, and I loved how dependent you came to be on me. It was for selfish reasons I let you suffer. And perhaps if last night had gone differently and you hadn't figured out my identity, I most likely wouldn't have followed through with my plan for you. It would be easy to keep you if I could endear you to me. The encephalitis would have been my key to your full trust."

And it would have been. If Hannibal had figured out what was wrong with him and helped him get better, the doctor would have had a hard time getting Will to leave him alone. He would have been in love.

But Will could say he liked it better where they ended up. At least they were on more equal footing and Hannibal was more open to share his secrets. But Will was feeling greedy. He wanted proof of the devotion Hannibal claimed to have for him. And he had offered.

"I want you to kill her for me."

Hannibal turned Will around and kissed him hard, nipping at his lips and drawing blood.

"Yes," he whispered before he licked his way into Will's mouth, smearing blood into the creases of his lips.

Hannibal grabbed hard at Will’s hip, holding his shoulders firmly in the other. This was no quiet seduction, the memory of their past kisses paling and fading out. Hannibal’s grip was bruising, and Will found those too sharp teeth lived up to their appearance as they tore through the thin skin of his lips, tongue lapping at the blood.

*‘My, what big teeth you have.’*

*‘Why, the better to eat you with my dear.’*

Chapter End Notes

Guillaume - A French version of 'William'.
Vilhelmas - A Lithuanian version of 'William'.

They're both getting really wrapped up in each other and crazy. And Abigail is on her way to Abi-veal. Will doesn't share, but neither does Hannibal so...

# That Cannibal, so romantic

Chapter Notes

> Aww yeah, they frick frack finally. But this is like the fucking longest foreplay in the world. Seriously. This chapter moves from sappy/romantic to creepy/weird so be prepared for that?
>
> Warnings: Graphic sex between 2 consenting adults, 2 permanent character deaths (not Will or Hannibal).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*'My, what big teeth you have.'*

*'Why, the better to eat you with my dear.'*

Will tried to drag his mind from fairy tales where someone gets eaten; the subject matter a little too close for comfort. Though, he had asked the hunter for a girl's heart hadn't he? He couldn't remember the lesson, but was sure it wasn't applicable. He was no evil queen and the huntsman was fully keen on him. His thoughts were disturbed as his back was slammed against the dining table, his legs subconsciously wrapping around Hannibal's waist.

"Although I do appreciate your brilliant mind William, I would appreciate it more if you focused it all on me." Hannibal had blood smears along his chin, the flecks of maroon burned bright in his eyes. He cradled the back of Will's knees and thumbed at the creases in his khakis.

"My thoughts were focused fully on you."

"Oh? And may I ask what they were concerning?"

"How sharp your teeth are," he smiled cheekily at the doctor. Hannibal sighed bemusedly before he released his grip on Will's legs, leaning over to cup the back of his head and kiss him softly before moving down his neck, lapping at the dried blood from his earlier death.

Will tilted his head, noting their breakfast still set further down the table, "What parts did you end up using for breakfast?"

Hannibal smiled against his jugular, "Both sets of lungs."

That was strangely sweet. Well, for Hannibal. "I never took you for a romantic."

"Hmm, perhaps only under the right circumstances." Hannibal's hands moved downward and started to pluck at the buttons of Will's ruined shirt, pulling it from underneath him and

tossing it aside. He paused and rose up to run his hands along the unblemished skin and crusted blood stains. He ran his fingers along the Will's ribs until he reached sharp hip bones.

"May I?" He asked as his fingers met the waistband of Will's borrowed pants. Will responded with lifting his hips and arching a brow.

Hannibal smiled before he unbuttoned and peeled down the khakis, pausing when he noted Will's hard cock. "I didn't expect you to not wear anything underneath," he said as he kneeled to pull them the rest of the way down and off.

"I do usually. But it seemed wrong to wear the underwear of the guy I had just killed."

Hannibal huffed in amusement, "I suppose everyone must have standards."

Will was hit with a warm rush of arousal. Fuck, Hannibal's laugh was just doing things to him. In a fit of self-confidence, he sat up on the table and shrugged his shirt off, his glasses skidding across the floor from his pocket. If they were going to do this, he wanted to remember it fondly and not cringe at his passive behavior. He brought one leg up, heel braced on the edge as he lazily pumped his cock. "And am I up to your standards?"

Completely naked and covered in dried blood, he thought he probably was. But it would be nice to hear some confirmation. If their banter had been any indication, they were well on their way.

That dark heat returned to Hannibal's eyes as he rose slightly from his crouch. He gripped at the knee of the leg hanging down and pushed it up until the heel rest on the edge. "You exceed and break any I had. Lean back and do not hold back anything from me."

Will was expecting some foreplay, but what he got was a cannibal eating him out. His tenuous grip on his member was lost as he moved both hands to grip the edge of the table.

Hannibal had spread him open, lapping at his puckered hole before teasing the rim. His tongue pierced through the tight clench and breeched the muscle. Will hadn't expected this, nor had anyone ever done this to him. A fingertip probed alongside rubbing and teasing in further open before a second joined. He felt full and exposed, but warm all over. Will hadn't known what he had expected from Hannibal in terms of sex, perhaps something more violent and sadistic in line with his psychopathy. But he supposed his fastidiousness would take precedence in this as much as it did his murders.

With fingers and tongue, the good doctor loosened and teased; Will felt increasingly sensitive and broke out into a sweat. The feeling wasn't necessarily comfortable, but he could feel the rising tension in his limbs, a feeling of anticipation. Hannibal pulled away and let his fingers increasingly tease, adding a third finger to the saliva slicked passage.

"All right Will?"

"Hmm, yeah. Ha, this the best you got? I was expecting more blood from how you kissed."

Hannibal hummed, “There is a time and place for such things. But do not confuse the appetizer for the main course.”

“Of course you’d use food, because---fuck!”

The doctor had extended his fingers and curled them upward in a motion that was innocuous but hit something that Will had never had stimulated. Hannibal continued to rub the edge of his prostate rhythmically, causing him to pant.

“Okay, okay, I get it. Just---could you just get to it?”

“Dear Will, you cannot simply ask me to murder without expecting me to act accordingly,” he kissed down the inside of Will’s thigh, leaving small nips red against Will’s skin, “It must be savored, as much the moment as this first for us.”

“Oh God, you are a romantic.” Will threw an arm over his eyes, feeling embarrassment creep up his skin in a blush. Of course Hannibal would act romantic with three fingers deep in him.

A sharp bite that tore at the skin on his hip bone and quickening tempo of Hannibal’s fingers shut Will up pretty quick.

“As I said, under the right circumstances, perhaps with a certain person,” his tongue soothed the teeth marks, lapping at the new blood welling to the surface and the older dried blood on his torso.

Will peeked over the edge of his arm calculating and weighing possibilities. What was one more experiment after all they’d done? And he had decided he wasn’t going to be passive throughout this; he needed to make Hannibal feel want as deeply as he did. Will grabbed at the doctor’s hair from between his thighs to catch his attention.

“Well, perhaps under these circumstances and as I am this person, you could just go ahead and fuck me,” he let his legs dangle off the edge of the table and pulled Hannibal up by his collar, “It’ll be our next experiment hmm?” He kissed along Hannibal’s jaw line, feeling the faint press of stubble, before he made it to Hannibal’s lips. He didn’t feel the pain he expected from his torn lips; there was no stinging stretch as he moved his mouth against Hannibal’s. Another thing to add to the list; accelerated healing.

Will started to unbutton Hannibal’s shirt, thinking it was rather unfair he was the only one naked. Hannibal pushed closer, grasping hard on Will’s hips, hard enough to leave sharp nail impressions. The cuffs proved problematic when Will tried pushing the shirt off.

“Fuck, get this off,” Will said as he tugged at the material while still kissing. He was frustrated; he thought that trying to be more active would have gone smoother. So far, he’d been outsmarted by Hannibal, the fucking king of foreplay, and couldn’t even get this shirt off. How had Hannibal taken his own shirt off? He didn’t even remember fucking cuff buttons.

“So impatient,” Hannibal murmured and stepped back to work on the wrist buttons, his torso still streaked with dried blood from his own death, matted in chest hair. Will admired the

view when he was struck by a most brilliant idea.

He slid off the table, and fell into a crouch. Bemused maroon eyes glanced down to him as Hannibal removed the button up and tossed it to the side. Will set to removing Hannibal's pants, pushing them down and found black briefs.

"Ha, of course you'd be a briefs man. It wouldn't have worked if I had borrowed any; I'm a boxer man through and through." Will ran his fingers along the waistband, noting the brand name was something he had never heard of and wasn't sure he could pronounce. He pushed them down to join the pants and revealed Hannibal's lovely uncut cock.

Hannibal kicked the both pants and briefs away from his ankles and ran a hand softly through the agent's curls. "I've changed your way of thinking before, perhaps I could enlighten you to the error of your ways."

Will simply responded by taking Hannibal in hand and giving a cursory pump before pushing down the foreskin and engulfing from the tip down to his occupied hand. He started up a rhythm of sucking and pumping his hand as he bobbed along Hannibal's cock. He glanced up and noticed Hannibal's flushed face, the hand in his hair tightening enough for him to put one hand on the doctor's hip to ensure he kept control of the pace.

"You look beautiful like this, your lips around my cock. But you were even more beautiful covered in my blood, wrist deep in my rib cage."

Will gave a particularly sharp suck, one that hollowed out his cheeks, after that remark.

"Mmm, but the one thing I wanted most of all was a peek into your mind. What would you have done I wonder, with my body if I was indeed dead?"

The agent pulled off, a faint string of saliva streaming from his lip to Hannibal, "Your pillow talk is amazing. And I'm not sure if that's in a good or bad way," he gave a pump and paused. "Mostly I was worried we were wrong, or it was a one off thing. But, I started to think practically. I actually planned," he started slowly to move his hand, shifting the foreskin back, "I thought, well, waste not want not," Will smiled and kissed the head, "and really, what better way to send you off?"

Hannibal laughed in a deep dark manner, the madness he kept tightly hidden coming forth, peeking out before the one that truly saw him. The hand tangled in Will's curls tilted his head back, his other hand cupped his cheek, running a thumb along his cheek bone. "Let's go to bed."

"Don't want to fuck me on the table?"

"I'd rather fuck you on my bed, more comfortable for both of us I imagine," Hannibal said as he led Will upstairs to his bedroom.

"Perhaps it's a 'time and place' thing," Will quipped. "And honestly, my back was starting to sweat on the table. I probably would have slipped off."

“Now whose pillow talk is amazing?”

“Well, now we’re going to a place where there are actual pillows, maybe our talk will be better.”

The doctor laughed, ineffectively trying to stifle it.

*****

Hannibal pulled Will into his bedroom. He was no less pleased by this recent turn of events, even if it left his latest culinary creation to cool. There had been a strange number of happenings this morning, but each had been equally satisfying. Will taking initiative to add to their growing accumulation of data was the most surprising. He hadn’t thought Will would have in effect, committed suicide. But, he supposed he did so to spare Hannibal the burden. Sweet William, caring even in his killing. But Hannibal was most disturbed by the closeness Will exhibited with Alana. He called her to care for his dogs; it seemed by the ease in the exchange that she had done so before. Hannibal was unsure where this established their relationship. Had they moved from work colleagues to friends? Or perhaps Alana was finally starting to act on one of her impulses, pursuing Will slowly and through what he loved most. He made a mental note to keep an eye on her; not knowing her motives was enough to make Hannibal think the worst. And he would be rather peeved if he had to dispatch her; all that time and effort he took mentoring would have been a waste. How trite.

He was most surprised at the fevered anger Will had concerning Abigail. He was unsure if it was concerning the body conspiracy or that Will had been deceived by her. Hannibal liked to think it was the former, and thought that the jealousy was intoxicating but misplaced. He did so hate when Will suffered at anyone else’s hand, and Abigail had been toeing the line lately. Her death had been a forgone conclusion when she brazenly declared he was the man on the phone. She may have thought herself savvy, but she was inelegant and ineffective at trying to emotionally manipulate Hannibal. He was a master manipulator and refused to be a part of any game that went on for too long. She would break, perhaps under some long buried guilt, and Hannibal refused to be dragged along with her. The fact that Will asked so sweetly for her death made him start to plan his menu. Will would eat nothing but the freshest of meat if Hannibal had anything to do with it.

And if Will did not know that Hannibal helped Abigail in order to indebt her to himself, he needn’t know. It was far easier to manipulate someone that thought they could trust you; a tactic he had even utilized at the beginning of his and Will’s relationship. Yet it was far more fun seeing his rage build at the possibility Hannibal cared for another person. Such sweet selfishness deserved a reward.

He pulled down the covers and beckoned Will toward the bed; watching the agent slide back and spread against the crisp sheets. It was a sight he never thought he would see, all pale skin and thin athletic limbs draped across his bed. This was the partner he had always wished for but never thought he would have. He wanted to savor this moment just as much as every

other moment they had shared. Hannibal walked over to his bedside table to pull out a bottle of lube before he kneeled on the bed and moved over Will, placing a slight kiss on his lips.

“How would you like to proceed?” he asked as his lips moved downward along his jaw line.

Will chuckled as his arms came around Hannibal’s shoulders, “What if I said I want to fuck you?”

Hannibal nipped at his collarbone, “If you wish,” he smirked against Will’s skin. He never could deny Will anything, but by the impatient fingers digging into his back, he didn’t think Will would handle any more delays.

“Hmm, maybe not tonight. We’ve already had the longest foreplay in existence.”

Hannibal was content with this, and started to move his body down, nipping and tasting the expanse of Will’s chest. He was stopped by a sharp grip on his hair, tilting his head back to meet Will’s eyes.

“Give me the lube,” Will said, tugging at Hannibal’s hair when he took longer to act than Will liked. The tube exchanged hands and Will was quick to uncap it.

The doctor was surprised by Will. It appeared he kept trying to find his equilibrium in their new relationship. Hannibal shifted to the side, bracing himself on an elbow, content to see what Will wanted to achieve.

The empath spread his legs, his thigh resting against Hannibal’s chest. More lube had spilled out than anticipated and he had more spread across his palm than fingers, but he managed to pool enough to start fingering himself. Hannibal could admit he was particularly interested in the activity; leaning over Will’s thigh to observe. The agent’s fingers slicked the rim before pushing in and rubbing the excess into the passage. He scissored his fingers, expanding on the stretching Hannibal had previously done. It was lewd and obscene; the squelching noises of too much lube and Will’s harsh pants drove Hannibal to nearly throwing him on his stomach and shoving in. But he had always exuded patience in the most trying times and settled on simply watching.

“H-hey, c’mere, I wanna kiss you,” Will panted out beckoning with his unoccupied hand, with several fingers of the other still inside himself. Hannibal could do little else but obey, slipping between Will’s thighs and curving over his body. Will’s mouth opened easily, soft and yielding even as a leg pulled Hannibal in harder, the heel digging into the doctor’s back. He shuddered as he felt Will’s hand move to his cock, slicking it with lube, before lining himself up.

“C’mon, want to know what you feel like,” Will said as he gave a few pumps to slick more past the foreskin. He kissed along Hannibal’s cheekbone, huffing breaths against his cheek.

Hannibal lifted Will’s other leg up on his hip, and whispered, “So impatient,” as he finally pushed in. The doctor fell forward, resting mostly on Will. He had the sense to brace himself on an elbow as his hips went flush against Will’s. It was better than he could have imagined, deep in Will’s heat and embraced by him. Both took a moment to adjust, their bodies

shuddering at the new sensation. Will tucked his face against Hannibal's neck, kissing under his ear. His legs crossed behind Hannibal's back, one arm gripped tightly to his shoulders, the other scratched deep into his back.

"Are you going to move or am I going to have to flip us over?" Will huffed impatiently. Hannibal could feel his abdomen clenching in anticipation, but knew there'd be other times to indulge.

"Perhaps another time," he said as he started a gentle rocking. He wanted to savor this, and Will's impatience would not diminish his resolve.

Will gave a frustrated whine, "I always knew you were an asshole." He tried to rock up into the thrusts but had very little room to maneuver with Hannibal pressed tight against him.

"Your pillow talk leaves much to be desired."

He didn't expect the indignant huff or the tight grip on the back of his neck, nails digging into his hairline. Neither did he expect to be so completely undone when Will whispered harshly against his ear, "Either you start fucking me, or I'll kill you again and we'll fuck in your blood."

Hannibal sat up and kneeled between his thighs. He grabbed hard at Will's hips and pulled back until only the head was caught on the rim, before slamming back in. He set a harsh rhythm, nearly bending Will in half; a rhythm that grinded hip bones and bruised thighs. He hadn't expected such a reaction, but hearing the dark tone that suggested very much that Will would follow through, destroyed his self-control.

"Ha, a sadistic psychopath. I'm not surprised…mmm, but you're mine." Will clenched harshly against Hannibal, his legs splayed, with one over the doctor's shoulder, the other resting in the bend of an elbow. Hannibal moved one hand up to Will's shoulder for better leverage, his other remaining tightly gripped at Will's waist. He couldn't help the impulse to bite as he leaned forward and bit through the soft skin of Will's neck. The blood lazily dribbled out, his thrusts increasing in speed.

Will hadn't screamed, only grunting at the long expected violence. He dragged Hannibal away by the harsh grip on his hair, lapping at the blood staining his chin, before sucking and kissing it away from his lips. Their bodies started to move more easily as they matched pace, sliding their torsos through sweat and dried, flaking blood.

"Tell me. Tell me how you're going to kill her," he whispered against Hannibal's lips, before licking at the blood that streaked along his jaw line.

Hannibal didn't think he was going to last long; Will was far more perfect than he could have ever anticipated. Perhaps it was his empathy, but Hannibal knew it was Will embracing the evolution that had been set in motion. Sweet William didn't want to walk alone anymore; nor would he ever again.

"I would wait for her visit; it's usually during her group therapy sessions. She would come expecting dinner and a fatherly figure, but I would only reflect the worst of Hobbs. And like

her father, I would set out to kill her, but I would succeed."

His thrusts turned shallower, intending to hit the prostate. He wanted Will to feel intense pleasure while he described the crime scene he would soon visit. Will was panting harshly, sliding a hand down between their bodies to grip his cock.

"I would incapacitate her here, and drive out close to Quantico; Uncle Jack deserves a present. Just as she woke up, I would grasp her by the shoulders and push her back onto a stag head. She would scream in agony as the antlers tear through her skin and pierce into her rib cage. But I would stop, do you know why dear Will?"

Will licked off the blood on his own lips before saying, "So not to ruin the meat." Hannibal rewarded such an answer with a kiss to the corner of his mouth.

"I would work quick, not wanting her body to go into shock too fast. I want her to feel it. Feel it as I cut her open and slice her lungs out, delicately so as not to ruin the alveoli. Her heart would be next, a quick end to a short life. I'd finish mounting her body, pushing the antlers through her body completely. I would even remove her quadriceps, flaying her to reach her tender muscle tissue."

"Why would you do that?" Will sounded strained, his strokes on his cock speeding up.

Hannibal smiled darkly against Will's mouth, "Why, to feed you of course." Will bucked up to meet Hannibal's increasing pace, kissing him deeply, grunting as he came.

Hannibal tilted his head, resting his forehead against Will's. His dear William looked so lovely debauched, covered in sweat and blood. It was a sight that drove him to completion; imagining it in a set of different circumstances, after a successful tandem hunt.

They laid there, Hannibal draped and laying over Will, sweat drying, catching their breath. Hannibal was content to stay that way, warm and as close to Will as he could possibly be. But of course, Will's pillow talk left much to be desired.

"You know, that was great and all, but can you get off? You weigh a fuck ton."

His partner, so eloquent.

And when he took too long to comply, he got a sharp pinch on his side in reprimand.

So impatient.

He settled next to Will, content to at least be next to him, when he felt Will curl against his chest, throwing an arm around him.

But Will was his. What more could he want?

*****

They lazed around in bed until midday, talking softly, and kissing. It was wonderfully domestic, something Hannibal may have feigned, but never truly felt. They finally got up when they were too hungry to ignore it anymore. They showered and dressed, perhaps taking much longer in the former than doing the latter.

Hannibal was loath to eat their leftover breakfast but Will was intent on it. The doctor had to insist to at least warm it up before he allowed Will to eat it. His sweet William, so in need of proper care and guidance.

It was later in the day, closer to night, when the two of them were in the study reclining on a loveseat in his library, when they actually set time aside to research. Hannibal scrolled through his iPad, while Will flipped through a book of fairy tales. Neither had made much progress beyond establishing that the revival from death did in fact lend itself to accelerated healing. The bites on Will's neck and lips were completely healed, even the large scratch marks along Hannibal's back were gone. The doctor felt a small pang of remorse that none of their marks had lasted, but knew the tradeoff was far better than temporary markings. It was more information than they had previously, but there were far too many mythologies and folklores that had an immortality component to narrow it down.

"We're not getting anywhere," Will closed his book and placed it on the floor in a pile of previously discarded books. He leaned his head back, rubbing a hand down his face.

Hannibal could not disagree, "It appears so. Until we gather new data or it presents itself, there is a very great possibility that we may never have an answer." He turned off his tablet and placed it on a side table. "Would it be so bad? Not knowing?"

Will rolled his head toward the doctor, "It would because I would spend the rest of my life wondering. It would become my white whale, and I don't ever want to become so obsessed with something that I lose sight of myself."

Hannibal knew the weight of Will's analytical mind, his persistent nature drove him to law enforcement. He needed facts and resolution, a mystery solved. At times, his empathy could fulfill such a task, but for this instance there was nothing more they could do besides research. He was unsure if they would ever solve this, but he knew he would do whatever he could to find some resolution for Will. He kissed him on the forehead, "We will find an answer."

"Let's go to bed. I think I need to sleep more than the times between my deaths," Will smirked at Hannibal.

Hannibal mirrored an answering smile, "Come along then."

*****

It was far too early to wake on a Sunday morning with Will in his bed when Hannibal felt the shift of his mattress. He cracked an eye open, “Where are you off to so early?”

Will was slipping on his shoes. His eyes met Hannibal’s, “You should check your clock. We slept nearly 18 hours. It’s 3 in the afternoon.”

That startled Hannibal enough to look toward his clock on his bedside to indeed confirm it was so late. He had never slept so deeply, nor for so long. How strange.

“I need to get going. There’s some papers I need to finish grading and a presentation I need to prepare for.” Will moved over to Hannibal’s side of the bed, kissing him lightly. Hannibal savored the quiet domesticity, the assured affection.

“Let me walk you out.”

Their walk to the foyer had a brief detour to the dining room to sift through Will’s discarded clothes to find his glasses and phone. His wallet and keys were left in his coat by the door.

As Hannibal helped him into said coat and moved toward the door, Will finally broke the silence, “I won’t lie and say that I’m okay with everything that’s happened, but for the most important things, I feel…well not good, but, content? Content with this weekend. Umm, I just wanted you to know that.”

Oh, he did so love when Will blushed; his complexion hiding none of it. He gripped Will’s hand, sliding something into it, before holding the fingers in a loose grasp. Before Will could investigate what he was given, Hannibal gave him a brief kiss on the cheek. He stepped back, enjoying the look of shock on Will’s face.

“A scalpel? Is this the one you killed me with, or the one I killed you with?” he chuckled out.

“Hmm. I wonder,” he smiled one of his barely there smiles, enjoying the frustration on Will’s face.

Hannibal took a moment to gather his thoughts before he spoke again, a sliver of doubt surfacing and needing addressing, “I suspect you’ll be busy this week. The Copycat may revisit his greatest hits.” This was a test that Will would have been unable to prepare for, simply one he had to decide which side he would choose.

Will stilled, looking away and not meeting his eyes as he had done through the weekend. He took a deep breath before he slid the scalpel into his pocket, turning to meet Hannibal’s eyes with his own, “I suspect so; he is rather clever. We may never catch him, much like the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Hannibal smirked, knowing there was no one more perfect for him. He opened the door, “I’ll see you soon dear Will, drive safely.”

Will moved out the threshold, “I suspect I’ll be seeing you far sooner than anticipated.” His small smile lingered in Hannibal’s mind hours after.

*****

He set to work, cleaning his basement, the kitchen armchair, and discarding the plastic. The dining room was simply clothes strewn about and set his mind on laundry. Will's borrowed shirt was a lost cause and was added to his burn pile. His bed was a mess of dried blood smears and sweat, leaving a stale scent that he didn't wish to taint the memory with. Hannibal had just put the sheets to wash, when he heard noises in his kitchen. Following the sound, and fighting back the rising anticipation, he entered and saw Abigail picking through a fruit bowl on his counter, dressed in a winter coat and ever present scarf.

"Hello Abigail."

She turned and smiled, her face flush with the evening cold, "Hello Doctor Lecter. What's for dinner?"

He rolled up his sleeves, moving about the kitchen island, pulling out cutting boards and prep bowls.

"Veal is on the menu, I hope you'll stay. It's so nice to have company for dinner," he turned to see her nibbling at an apple.

"Of course! Do you need any help?" She moved closer to him, placing her apple on the counter.

He smirked, "If you could help me with the meat, I'd be most grateful."

She moved towards his large fridge, opening the door and gazing at the shelves, finally seeing the bowl he had retrieved from the basement. "Is it this one?" she said as she turned to address him.

Abigail never received her answer.

*****

On Hannibal's way back from Quantico late Sunday night, nearly Monday morning, he made a quick stop to a property he used in Virginia. He had a loose end to tie up that he had great plans for, but couldn't risk now that he had Will in his grasp. The new parameters of their relationship were tenuous at best so early in its change, and Hannibal wanted more time to cultivate it. Unlike Abigail, no one would find this body.

He dragged out the cover on the well, shining his flashlight down.

"Hello Miss Lass, it's time for your appointment."

Chapter End Notes

So...I told you right? And Miriam was moved to that building in preparation of taunting Jack more. But since this is early in season 1, there has been no Abel Gideon to force his hand (ha!), so she was just there, hanging out with both arms.

Their love has a body count now. Ooh, I wonder how many more~

# The Fair Ophelia

Chapter Notes

I kept rewriting this chapter. After the new episodes, I sort of felt like I had to change some interactions around. And I think it feels better this way.

I've taken some dialogue from Bedelia and Hannibal's sessions and crafted them together. This is where we really start to go AU. There won't be really any cases from Season 1 since Jack & Co will be focused on the Copycat. Let's just say those cases got delegated to other teams.

This is where we really start to spiral out. All I'll say is dude, full blown murder husbands are nigh.

Warnings: Character death (not Will or Hannibal), description of a gruesome crime scene, and brief description of the murder taking place.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will arrived home not much later than he had expected; traffic had been light. He couldn't help but feel the shift of the new object in his pocket. He had been shocked when he felt the cool metal handle back in his hands, the clear plastic cap covering the blade. He was quite convinced that it was one that Hannibal had picked up from some hiding place on the way to the door, completely unrelated to the weekend's events. But the weight was familiar, a favorite tool of Hannibal's. Playing dumb was never one of Will's strong suits, but he was unsure of where the conversation was leading. When Hannibal started mentioning the resurgence of the Copycat, he knew this was one final test before he was allowed to leave. The scalpel would be the deciding factor; whether he used it to incapacitate Hannibal, or the doctor used it in reaction to Will's reluctance for follow through. Will was pleasantly surprised that Hannibal didn't allow himself to be emotionally compromised. It proved how he hadn't been caught; a placid temperament even in the most violent of actions. There were times during the weekend when he could see through Hannibal's attempts at subtle manipulation, but Will couldn't fault him for it. Perhaps he knew no other way to gain bonds of trust. So he allowed them, knowing that as time went on, Hannibal wouldn't feel the need to try and bind Will as closely to him. Will would be there, beside him, completely of his own volition. Why would he leave? Especially when things were getting so interesting.

His dogs had all crowded around him, sniffing at the unfamiliar clothes. He'd had to again, wear something of Hannibal's, even let himself be talked into wearing the boxer briefs. He still preferred the loose fit of his boxers, but liked the possessive rove of Hannibal's gaze as he put each layer of the doctor's clothes on. Will could do subtle manipulations as well. He let the dogs out to run, taking a moment to watch them, before stepping back inside to set out their dinner and refresh their water. He found a note on his kitchen counter from Alana,

saying she hoped he had a nice fishing trip and that she didn't mind checking in on his dogs. The squiggly smiley face at the end made him smile. In another life, if he was a good man, there would have been a chance. She wasn't the one for him, but he appreciated her friendship all the same.

He put the scalpel on his desk with the rest of his lure making equipment; he could probably use it to trim the feathers and thread. Will called all the dogs back in, ensuring their floor heater was on, before focusing on his work. He pulled out his laptop from his messenger bag, booting it up while he settled on the bed he had moved down into his living room. He hadn't really expected to have most of his weekend taken up by his attempted murder. Well, successful murder actually. He set to work, pulling out essays from his bag and getting down to grading.

*****

Will woke when his alarm went off; a first for a very long time. He was genuinely surprised he hadn't woken up during the night or had a horrid nightmare. He had a vague recollection that he did dream, but couldn't remember it. Or maybe it had been so dark, he couldn't see. Strange.

He had finished his grading and finalized his speech for his presentation. Feeling rather optimistic about the day, he made it to Quantico early. It actually gave him time to grab some coffee and a muffin for breakfast. It felt nice not having to rush while feeling exhausted. His class seemed to flow smoothly, it was a shame it was interrupted while nearly finished.

Jack burst in, "Everybody out," he shouted while striding into Will's class. Rather rude, Will thought, as he shouted out the reading that needed to be done by next class. He started packing up, already knowing where this conversation was going to lead.

"There's a body, it could be the Ripper," Jack whispered as he waited for Will to finish.

Huh. Perhaps Hannibal had been just as busy as Will had.

"Where?" he asked as they strode out of the classroom. "Should we ride together or do you want me to catch a ride with forensics?"

Jack finally paused, taking a deep breath, "That's not going to be necessary, it's in our backyard. It's literally in one of the training grounds for the academy. One of the classes came across it while running."

Will almost couldn't process the information. Oh. *Oh*. Hannibal had been busy; fulfilling a promise to Will as quickly as he could. The thought shot a bolt of heat through him, almost making him hard before he controlled himself. Hannibal had killed for him only for the simple fact that he had asked. Whether it was a sign of devotion or of trust, Will was unsure. He'd have to see Abigail's body to be sure.

*****

It had been a rather busy week for Dr. Lecter and he couldn't help but appreciate his upcoming appointment with Dr. Du Maurier. She was a perfect sounding board for him, helping him perfect his mask while at the same time smooth out any wrinkles in his person suit. Most of his previous appointments dealt with issues concerning treatment for his patients, in essence acting as he did with Will Graham. They had conversations and she provided insight that helped him craft appropriate responses to quell the urge to simply twist his patients' minds as he saw fit. He needed to leave some patients alive to have a thriving practice after all.

Lately however, he had been discussing his work with Will Graham. Later appointments turned to actual therapy as he worked through what he felt for the empath. It was a novel feeling for both of them, she had never seen him exhibit such emotion, let alone thought he was capable of a semblance of it. He was simply disturbed by the level of affection he felt and his last appointment had been a deciding factor in choosing to end the agent's life. Now, he felt more settled in his own mind, taking control of his new level of sentiment and accepting it and his new found relationship. He almost felt giddy; what would Dr. Du Maurier's reaction be to the fact that the most dangerous man she had encountered was involved with a man that could catch him? Perhaps another game was in order. He did so love to test people.

After her retirement, it had only taken showing up at her house once at his usual appointment time to get her to concede. The fright in her eyes had been delicious, as if she wasn't sure if he would kill her as brutally as her other patient, or would do so if she refused. She always opened her door to him, even if it wasn't in hospitality but compliancy. Hannibal would take the veneer of civility if only because he could.

They both sat in her lovely sitting room. He had a tendency to mirror her, having crafted his professional persona on the psychiatrist he most admired. Both sat, right legs crossed, simply observing each other for a moment, before Hannibal started off the session.

"I would like to continue to where we left off, discussing Will Graham."

She quirked an eyebrow, "Oh? And what would you wish to discuss? Your friendship or his health?"

He took a moment to glance off to the side, adding to the pantomime of their session. "For the first time in a long while, I see the possibility for a relationship."

"Do you mean the friendship or breaching more ethical lines and pursing a more…romantic route?"

He could sense the dissention in her tone, he tried to temper down his amusement, but could feel her ire rise. She could always glimpse past his person suit.

“I see someone that has the capacity to understand me. There is a potential there and I wish to pursue it before the time passes,” he took a moment to gauge what most riled her and added, “He is not my official patient, merely a colleague I help construct profiles with.”

She leaned back, gaze assessing before speaking, “It’s nice to have someone see us Hannibal. Or have the ability to see us. It requires trust and trust isn’t easy for you.”

Hannibal hummed in agreement before leaning back himself, “You’ve helped me better understand what I want. And what I don’t want.”

“You want someone…worthy.”

“He has set himself apart in my mind and is distinct from everyone I’ve ever encountered. We see the world in different ways, yet he can assume my point of view. I find him to be on par with me, a feeling I find reluctant to give up.”

Her placid features turned even stiller, her alarm only evident in the slight widening of her eyes. Hannibal knew the thoughts running through her mind even before she spoke them.

“You are obsessed with Will Graham,” her lips thinned in disapproval.

He allowed a small smirk through, “I am intrigued.”

“Obsessively.”

Oh, he did so love their banter. It was one of the reasons why he refused to let her slip from his grasp. Perhaps in another life, he could have loved her. But she was repulsed by the small glimpse she had seen of his true self. That relegated her to mere chattel that could be disposed of once the novelty wore off. He especially enjoyed how she reacted to him after she saw him kill. Hannibal could see her try to hide behind her defensive professionalism, but he could see the cracks forming. She would surely act foolishly soon enough, all he had to do was wait.

*****

Will walked with Jack through the Quantico campus out toward the training grounds. There were a great deal of trees in the forested area. They followed the running trails, having to pass through a group of trainees on the fringes trying to catch a glimpse of the scene. They were lucky it was on federal property and other spectators would have quite an amount of difficulty accessing the scene. If Will was right, then this would be more fuel for Ms. Lound’s ever inciting speculations. He didn’t hold his breath that she wouldn’t find a way in, but he just needed a little time to sway Jack to his thinking.

The tableau was familiar, the so dubbed ‘field kabuki’ he had called it, in literally his first life. There was a small field a few feet away from one of the prominent running trails, surrounded by tall light colored trees. Abigail’s body was displayed in much the same way as

Cassie Boyle. Her arms and legs curved towards the ground, antlers pierced her chest and protruded out, the stag head's glass eyes stared off toward nothing. She was spread open, white ribs merging with the antlers, twisting toward the sky. Her chest cavity appeared to be scooped out, no organs were visible and Will suspected there wouldn't be much left to find; Hannibal did love his sweetbreads. Instead, she was filled with a wide assortment of flowers, the sort that must have grown in the area. Her thighs and arms were flayed, large pieces of the muscle missing and only held their shape by the still present bone.

"This looks very familiar Jack. Remember Minnesota?" He grabbed gloves from a passing investigator before getting closer.

"You said he would never kill this way again," Jack grated out as he followed.

"I also said I was wrong, if you recall, when we found Marissa Schurr's body in the cabin."

Will stepped closer. He stilled, taking notice of her face. Pale, wind-chafed, and very Mall of America. Her eyes were closed, lips blue, her brunette hair billowed around in the soft morning wind. She finally looked at peace, not carrying that haunted look that plagued her and caused her to lash out or try and endear others to her. What made him pause was that Jack must have known but didn't even warn him. His boss was rather cruel, but efficient.

"This---this is Abigail. Jack…" He knew he had to lay it on if he was to be believed.

Jack stood beside him, finally looking contrite, "Yes, I'm sorry I didn't warn you. But your insights are valuable to us Will. If this had been the Ripper, we could have caught a break. Whether you like it or not, you're the best and have to look at this objectively to catch her killer. Don't you want Abigail's death to have closure?"

How fucking emotionally manipulative. Jack Crawford may be head of the BAU for no other reason than his expertise at it. Well at least he was better now at resisting and not letting his sense of morality be overrun. He took a deep breath, this is where he had be very convincing and hope Hannibal gave him enough to work with.

"I understand that, I do Jack. Just…give me a little time with this okay? It's going to be hard for me to see…to see how she died," he glanced at Jack's chin, hunching in his shoulders and clenching his hands. He could play well at unstable because he actually had been. Now, that was far from the case.

Jack's mouth pinched, "Alright. Forensics finished their initial sweep and have a rush on what they found. Confirm if this is the Copycat or something else," he then stalked back toward the academy, probably to terrorize forensics to get results faster.

Looking back at Abigail's body, it was far too easy to fall into Hannibal's mindset. The scene fell before him, just as Hannibal described. He would tell Jack the flowers were Nicholas Boyle's attempt at apologizing for not being able to stop. But in truth, it was a declaration. Hannibal had intent, and Will was his endgame. It felt strange to be the focus of such obsession. But not altogether unpleasant. Far from it. He didn't mind it at all.

Will stood there, vacantly staring at the body. The photographers moved around him, forensics worked on the field, looking for footprints or stray fibers. All the while, they buzzed around Will, skirting him while allowing him to see the killer. But in this, that was unnecessary, he already knew, but he wouldn't say; he really didn't feel he could at this point. Only the name of Nicholas Boyle would pass his lips. Hannibal's strange tests of him were amusing; he supposed even a psychopath felt the need for validation in a relationship.

*****

He made it back to the academy, weaving through the agents and eventually the trainees still corralled behind barriers farther down the trail. He gave a few nods to past and present students as he made his way through. He took the time to adjust his glasses as he walked towards the forensics labs. Jack was there, looming, and discussing with Price and Zeller the similarities between this case and the Copycat kill in Minnesota. Will was met with everyone's attention at once, and didn't necessarily have to feign the nervousness. His social awkwardness roared back, before he tempered it back.

"Will, what did you find?" Jack was quick to stride over.

He took his time, rubbing at his beard and adjusting his glasses again before he started. "I'm sure it's Nicholas Boyle. He's started to realize the full extent of what he's done, but he can't stop. The only way he sees to close the door that Hobbs opened in him is to finish his work. He set his sights on Abigail…and he's done what Hobbs couldn't do."

Price piped in, "It could explain all the random sightings of him that were reported; he was traveling."

"Yeah, but look at what he did to her. That level of sadism just doesn't show up randomly. Look at Marissa Schurr, his last victim, was just impaled. There wasn't this level of harvesting even in his first victim. This seems more like the Chesapeake Ripper to me," Zeller threw in.

There was a beat of silence where everyone tried to settle their thoughts. Will was about to offer a rebuttal when Beverly strode in with a printout, her ponytail flying behind her.

"I got a match! There was a small hair fragment caught under one of her nails. I ran an analysis and it's a match for Nicholas Boyle," she handed the printout to Jack, giving a quick wave to Will.

Oh thank God for Bev. He really didn't feel like getting into another argument with Zeller. Even if, for once, he was right.

Jack seemed satisfied with the way everything was tying together, finally letting go that it was a Ripper kill. "I want an APB to be put out for Boyle, he might still be in the area."

Beverly nodded, “I’ll check with the psych hospital she was at to find out how she got out or if they’d seen anyone strange around.”

Will added, “Alana had mentioned that she would jump the wall at the hospital and disappear sometimes. Maybe she would walk around Baltimore and Boyle took her there?”

“That might be what happened, I’ll talk with her and Dr. Lecter since they treated her.” She gave him a soft smile, “We’ll catch him Will.”

He smiled back, “I know.” She patted him on the shoulder as she left.

Jack started heading out, “I’ll get warrants for security footage in the area, and maybe we’ll catch a break.” He turned to the empath, “Will, do you have a moment to walk with me?”

Will gave a quick nod to the Price and begrudgingly Zeller, before following Jack out.

They walked in silence toward the classrooms. Will couldn’t imagine what else Jack would want to discuss.

“Will, I know I’ve thrown a lot at you today, and I’m sorry for that. But there’s one more thing I’m asking you to do. I want you to---well, to tell Dr. Bloom about Abigail. I think this is news that’s better delivered from a friend.” He glanced at Will, “If that’s too much, just let me know, and I’ll do it.”

“Of course Jack. You have a lot of work ahead of you. And…Alana deserves to be told, not to hear it from some trainee walking down the hall.”

Jack cracked a smile, “You’re a good man. Keep me posted of any other impressions you get from Boyle. I’ll have the crime scene photos sent to you as soon as they finish processing the scene.”

And he left, toward his office, that confidant swagger ever present in his step. Why wouldn’t he be delighted with how the day turned out? His best profiler worked through a case he was sure would break him, he had good leads on Nicholas Boyle, and he didn’t have to face Alana Bloom and her accusations. What a perfect day for Agent Crawford.

All Will Graham could think was what an awfully long day this was turning out to be. Of fucking course it’d have to be him to tell her. A vindictive part of him wanted Hannibal to do it. But he knew all that would achieve would be veiled sympathy and horrible cannibal puns. Delegation was rather key, as demonstrated by Jack.

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It was harder to find her than he had first suspected. She wasn’t in her office, given to her after her guest lecturing became an actual class. She wasn’t lingering in her classroom, nor the cafeteria or library. Will felt uneasy, and found his way outside. He found her waiting at

the edge of the taped off area. She was dressed in her coat and still had her bag with her; she must have just arrived for a later class.

“Hello Alana.”

She turned to him, her face pale and contrasting so lovely with her dark hair; she almost looked like Abigail. “No one’s saying anything. Was it the Ripper?”

“Come on, let’s get inside,” he tried to lead her to the academy with a hand on her elbow.

She walked a few steps before stopping and turning to him, “What is it Will? Or---or should I ask, who is it?”

He rubbed the back of his neck, knowing she would get angrier the longer he dragged it out, “It’s Abigail. The Copycat killer got to her.”

Her face lost what little color it had in the cool winter’s day. “W-what? But how? She was safe here, in the hospital. She…kept sneaking out.” Her face took on a morose look, her eyes started to tear.

“I’m sorry Alana. He must have followed her after his first chance wasn’t successful. We have fairly good confirmation that it was Nicholas Boyle though,” he gave her elbow an affectionate squeeze, “We’ll catch him.”

She gave him a watery smile that he returned. It was a rather touching moment, one that was rudely interrupted.

“Well, thank you Mr. Graham for divulging that lovely amount of information,” said a voice he seriously didn’t want to hear.

He turned to find Freddie fucking Lounds in her high-heeled glory.

“You are on federal property Ms. Lounds. I would kindly ask you to leave, especially since this is an open murder investigation.”

She smiled, more fabricated than friendly, “I seemed to be having some car trouble. I simply pulled into the closest parking lot to wait for a tow when I saw all the commotion over here.”

Alana gave a snort, “Yes, I’m sure.” She moved to loop her arm through Will’s, turning to walk back to the academy.

“Dr. Bloom, don’t you find it strange that all of a sudden, a man with no history of violence or psychopathic tendencies, efficiently and brutally kills 3 women? And that this man also travelled all this way, found the opportune moment and place, to recreate the murder of his sister? It doesn’t add up to me.”

“I’m not sure what you’re implying Ms. Lounds, but I don’t think we care to indulge your theories,” Alana said as she pulled Will along.

But Freddie Lounds could never let anyone else have the last word, “Where were you this weekend Mr. Graham? Busy?”

“Goodbye Ms. Lounds,” he said offhandedly to her.

Will walked with Alana back towards the academy, never noticing the slight furrowing between her brows.

*****

They had a quick lunch, meeting up with Price and Zeller on the way. Will didn’t mind it though; the forensics team always seemed to take over any conversations they were a part of. Which was better than Will’s awful ideas for post-consolatory conversation. They were able to get a few laughs out of Alana, and surprisingly Will too, when they recounted what Beverly did to them when they took it upon themselves to reorganize the lab. It felt nice to forget about the gravity of what he’d done, but he still felt it was justified. Glancing over to Alana, he saw the weight of grief settled on her features, even if she had just been laughing. It was in her eyes, a settled sadness that wouldn’t leave for a while. Will wondered how she had come to be so attached to Abigail in such a short amount of time.

He quickly dismissed the stupid question, as he had just as easily fell into it as well. Abigail had played them all, acting as vulnerable as she felt but still retaining the cunning that kept her from being killed by her father. Her only wrong move had been trying to escape by going to college. She should have known you never escape a monster after you placate it. Once it’s seen the ease of your submission, it will accept nothing less. She must have learned from her mistakes though, of putting too much faith in her abilities to protect herself. That’s why she started finding people to do it for her. She had gathered all the allies she could as quickly as she could, when she had seen the suspicion creep into Jack Crawford’s gaze. And Will could see how easily it would have worked too. How he or Alana would have run interference for her, how Hannibal would easily dissuade Jack from any thoughts of her involvement. The accomplice to the Minnesota Shrike would have easily walked away free, none the wiser.

And Will was starting to understand, that doing bad things to bad people felt good.

He had to get back to his room, another class coming in for the afternoon. He said his farewells and stole an apple off Alana’s tray, giving her a small smile as he bit into it. She gave him a watery laugh and waved him off, her eyes following him the whole way.

*****

Later that night, Hannibal Lecter was finishing grinding up some meat for sausage. He had finished seasoning it and let it set in his fridge for the flavors to meld. The doctor had plans to make *Saucisse* for Will, a French type of fresh sausage. He had completed cleaning the intestines for the casing and set those in his fridge as well. All courtesy of Abigail. She did, after all, offer to help with the meat.

Oh, how she had screamed and begged when she woke in the field and saw the stag head. She pleaded and attempted to bargain as soon as she realized what he was going to do. But he was past any persuasion; a liability needed to be tied up and if it further endeared sweet William to him, all the better. He had felt greedy and took more than he had anticipated. The feeling that he would feed Will and he would knowingly eat what he provided overwhelmed him. She had kicked and struggled, hastening his decision to cut out her muscle tissue first. After all, how could she kick and scratch if she simply didn't have the muscles to do so? The rest had been easy, blood loss and shock settling in as he finished his harvesting. His tableau was rather ruined though, forcing him to improvise. Flowers were easy enough to find in the surrounding area, and what better way to send her off? 'Sweets to the sweet' and something lovely for Will to *see*. He had never underestimated Will's empathic abilities and knew the level of his regard was visible in the artful arrangement of wildflowers, which ended up being more for the profiler than any sense of pride for a theatrical display. It was the most he could do under the guise of the Copycat killer, but knew Will would understand. He would have to make the next move and Hannibal eagerly awaited its occurrence.

Some part of him was rather excited at the possibilities now open to him. He had half expected Jack Crawford and a team of agents to break down his door. He was more than pleasantly surprised when it didn't happen. His dear Will, so quick to adapt, he could only hope his continued evolution went just as smooth. Hannibal was sure he would be magnificent.

There was a loud knocking at his door. Ah, that was probably *Guillaume* now, rushing over after the scene was processed and Jack was satisfied with his answers. Untying his apron and putting it away, he headed to the door, nearly running. It felt so strange, the anticipation and eagerness, he had never felt like this, even as a child. Perhaps this is what normal people felt when they were in love. If it had been for anyone else, he would say it was bothersome, and eliminate the problem element. But for Will, he could suffer the slight indignity, it had its rewards.

Opening the door, warm smile in place, it faded back to his more professional demeanor. "Hello Alana, do come in."

"Hello Hannibal," she rushed in from the cold, putting up her coat and scarf, before striding to the kitchen, "I need a beer, the biggest glass you have."

He chuckled, following after, "I believe I only have the standard size glasses, but you can always refill."

Hannibal found her going through his cabinets before triumphantly holding a beer glass and making her way to the fridge to fill it.

"If I may ask, what has you in the effort to become inebriated so quickly?"

She tilted her glass as it was filled to cut down on the foam, “Abigail was found murdered today. They’re saying it’s the Copycat.”

He softened his voice, “Yes, Agent Katz informed me. It’s quite a shock.”

Alana closed the fridge door, taking a large gulp of beer before answering, “I think Will might have killed her.” She set the glass on the stainless steel work table, dabbing at her eyes.

Hannibal moved towards the kitchen island, and grabbed a knife from the knife block, easing it down behind his thigh. He did so hate having to get his kitchen messy so soon after he cleaned it, but some messes couldn’t be avoided.

He huffed out a laugh, “Oh? And what makes you say that?”

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh. You're not winning Hannibal over by talking about his boyfriend behind his back Alana.

Thank you so much for the kudos, comments, bookmarks and subscriptions! It means so much to me and you are all so kind! <3

And if you're on tumblr, so am I!

everett-harte.tumblr.com

# A Crown of Stars.

Chapter Notes

OMG! I finally finished this chapter! Sorry it took a bit, but I got stuck on a scene. You'll probably know which one when you read it, it's the longest lol.

And this one is dedicated to sku7314977! Thank you for the kind words! <3

Trigger Warnings: A main character death (not Will or Hannibal). There's a pretty vicious verbal argument and physical altercation that results in death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"I would prefer if you would take this seriously," Alana sniffed out, wiping at her eyes again.

"Well, I find the allegations rather humorous since Will has made it his life's work to catch killers, even at the price of his own health," Hannibal walked behind the kitchen island.

She took up her glass and drank more. Rather than savoring the flavors, she chugged it down like any cheap domestic during happy hour. Rude.

Her voice wavered, still stuck between crying and holding her tears at bay. "I know. It's just that…he was so different today. And, God, it was Freddie Lounds that made me start to think…"

He gave a derisive snort, "That may be your first problem, relying on Freddie Lounds as a moral compass. Tell me, how should he act after finding someone he cared for dead?"

Alana finally looked at him, "It's not how he acted, I suppose, but the lack of reaction. He was calm, not unsettled like he usually is after a crime scene. But then…Freddie Lounds showed up and ended up asking him what he did this past weekend…"

She looked down at her nearly finished glass and moved back to the fridge to fill it.

Hannibal shifted his grip on the knife, "So your whole argument lies with Will being better able to handle the stresses of his job? I have been working with him Alana and I am a rather good therapist. He has made grand improvements. For you to disparage such progress based on the comment of a tabloid journalist is unfair to both myself and Will."

She had to feel some modicum of shame as she turned back to face him, closing the fridge door, with full glass in hand. Her eyes refused to meet his for a moment, as she filled the silence by taking another, more measured sip of her beer. Hannibal almost thought he had won her over, before her eyes rose up, tears gone, and blazed in curiosity.

“Why are you so quick to defend him? You’ve known me longer than him. Why can’t you entertain me and listen to my fears? Do you think I want Will to be guilty? But his strange behavior combined with his abnormal weekend plans leads me down a path I never wanted to entertain.”

Clever girl. She was always a student that could cut to the heart of the matter, something he had admired if not found tedious at times. But this situation was not entirely unsalvageable; he could still indulge his curiosity and see how far she could get before she met her end.

“All right. Tell me what has convinced you of Will’s guilt.”

Alana squared her shoulders and set her glass down, “This past weekend, I got an early call from Will. He spoke…frantically, but hushed. He wanted me to take care of his dogs, he decided to go on a fishing trip but had to leave right now if he wanted to make it in time.”

She rubbed at her forehead, “God, I was so stupid. I said yes, because why wouldn’t I? I never thought about how strange it was for him to act so impulsively. Whenever he’s gone out of town before, he’s always sure to ask in advance if I can watch his dogs. He’s never just gone and disappeared like that.”

Hannibal sighed, “Abigail was killed Sunday night Alana. I know for a fact he spent his night grading student essays and preparing for a presentation. Perhaps he just needed to clear his head or he saw what a nice day Saturday was.”

Her head lifted up, “I never said he called me Saturday. He could have called me Sunday morning.” She pursed her lips, “You know something, don’t you?”

He almost smirked, but curtailed it, wanting to savor her outrage. It would be the last time he would allow himself to be scolded by her. Alana’s already suspicious gaze focused on Will was the last thing Hannibal needed before he had fully bound Will to him. He would miss their rapport, if only for the ease she felt around him when so few did. She was the only one that couldn’t innately sense the predator in the room. And it would be her downfall.

Hannibal allowed an expression of hesitance to fall across his face, before, speaking in a reluctant cadence, “I may…Will and I have evolved from a friendship to a relationship. He came over Friday night and didn’t leave until Sunday afternoon. That would explain his hasty arrangements. It was a rather unexpected, but not unwelcome development for the both of us.”

Alana’s face was a lovely progression from paling and shocked to red-flushed outrage. “He’s your patient Hannibal! You can’t cross boundaries like that! You could lose your license easily. Will isn’t stable enough for a relationship and you could be exacerbating any number of issues he has.”

He allowed some of his anger to peek through, already tiring of the façade of civility. “You are aware that he and I only speak during his cases to aid in his development of profiles. Any therapy we engage in is purely unofficial and is only reactionary to his caseload, never personal.”

Hannibal walked further along the island, closer to the work table, but still behind the counter. "But perhaps that isn't the issue. Perhaps you are outraged more on your behalf. Two men that you were attracted to found a better match with each other than with you," he smirked cruelly, "How does that make you *feel*?"

Alana's face looked truly furious, "That was rude Hannibal. Shockingly rude. It's only the years of friendship that are allowing me to forget you said that to me." She took a deep breath, and sipped at her beer.

But Hannibal was having far too much fun. He wondered, what would cause her to act in violence? What would be the trigger for ever calm Dr. Bloom? The Dr. Bloom that was so quick to think the worst of Will Graham, when the true monster was before her.

"You are too cynical Alana. Perhaps it's for the best you have only remained friends with us and never fully pursued, if you are so changeable. Dear Will is in far more *capable* hands than he could be with you."

She slammed her glass down, grip tight, "What do you want me to say? That I'm alright with this? I'm not. And for the both of you to lie about it makes me think both of you know how it'll be perceived." An equally cruel smirk crossed her face, "And what will happen, I wonder, if such a thing got out? To Jack Crawford? Or even Freddie Lounds? What would happen, I wonder, to you and Will?"

Ah, he saw now. Alana Bloom was never one to react physically, but strategically. A psychiatrist knew all about the mind, and he could see her weighing and measuring what he allowed through his mask. She could be cruel, but only when pushed. It was such a shame he wouldn't have more time to explore how far such a strategy would lead her, but if his plans were to be fulfilled, he'd have to follow a strict timeline.

He shifted his weight more and tensed his calves, "You claimed to not appreciate rudeness, and yet threaten myself and my partner within my own home. Does it unsettle you? The easy reason that explains away your deep seeded fears? Fears that came to light with little provocation? You've claimed to care for Will, but have truly only wanted to change him, not help him---"

"Like you're helping him? I'm sure Hannibal, I'm really fucking sure you haven't tried to change him. He's different now, and I'm not sure I like it if it's because of your doing. Your relationship is based already on an imbalance of power, doctor and patient, how healthy is that?"

He let out a chuckle, "How healthy would it have been if you and I had pursued a relationship? I was your mentor. Have you always held a fixation on authority figures in your life? Did you fantasize about me while you were doing your residency?" He smirked, "Tell me about your relationship with your father."

Alana finally reacted, throwing her beer glass at Hannibal far quicker than he had expected. He blocked, and batted it away from him, to shatter against his cabinets. Beer and glass shards sprayed between them, her eyes widened in shock. Ultimately, he had revealed his hand, knife in full view.

“W-why do you have a knife Hannibal?” She asked, moving a step back.

And Hannibal finally allowed his person suit to slip, the faintest threads of humanity within him broke, and the full depths of his true self surfaced. It felt so satisfying to see her move away from him in fear, to move closer to the hallway out, as if she thought she had a chance to escape.

“For the amount of study you’ve put into your degree, you still cannot see what is before you. Would you have continued to think that Will is a killer? And attempted to give justice to Abigail?” He stepped closer, mirroring her steps as she moved away.

“And if that’s the case, you were accusing the wrong man,” his grin turned feral, as he slashed out with his knife.

Alana darted away, skidding across the tile in her heels. She dashed toward the island, hands bracing along the edge, in an attempt to reach the side door.

“I only wonder, how dear William will take your death,” he stalked toward her, “But it is no matter, I will be there for him.”

“Shut up!” she screamed, turning to face him. Hannibal noticed the knife block was thrown on its side, before he felt the cool slide of his 12 inch knife slide in between his ribs. He felt his lung shudder with his breath and deflate, as it was punctured and filled with blood. His own knife fell against the floor, his hands going momentarily slack in shock.

Alana quickly jolted her hand away, a horrified look crossing her face, before her gaze turned to her blood stained hands. “Oh God---”

He allowed a chuckle to pass his lips, blood spilling over. He laughed harder as her eyes widened and drifted upwards, past the protruding knife handle. Hannibal couldn’t fathom what made her step back, all the while, holding her bloodied hands away from her, eyes focused upward. He finally regained her full attention when he pulled the knife from his chest, causing a steady stream of blood to bubble out.

“Wait! What are you doing! You’ll die without pressure on the wound,” she wet her lips, “Let me call for an ambulance. W-we can say it was an accident…and nothing we’ve said to each other will ever get out.” Alana spoke in a measured manner, trying to stay calm, even as her eyes darted from his bleeding chest, upwards.

Hannibal threw the knife to the ground, and used his hands to rip at the large tear in his shirt to expose the wound. The blood flow had ceased, and running his hands along the cut, he found no wound, simply a seam of newly healed flesh. His lung had re-inflated, allowing him to huff out more laughter at the thought of her killing him.

Alana had backed up toward the wall, “How? What are you?”

“What am I? I am a god amongst mortals.”

Her eyes looked upward once again, before she muttered, “That’s not there…”

Hannibal finally struck, grabbing her by a fistful of hair, startling her enough to finally scream. "My dear, what is it that you see?"

She tried to pull away, her hands curling against his fingers to try and pry them off.

He tightened his hold, giving her a hard shake, "I will not ask again."

Biting her lip against the pain, she finally answered, "I thought it was a shadow, or just the stress getting to me. But there were---I'm sure there were…"

Hannibal twisted his hold on her hair, feeling strands breaking and her scalp pull. Her hands dug their nails into his skin as she hissed in pain. "Finish your thought or I'll snap your neck."

"Antlers!" she yelled out. "I thought I saw fucking antlers on your head. But they weren't really there. I could see through them, like a shadow."

That…was a development he may have to share with William the next time he saw him.

His momentary distraction was not missed. Alana hit with her full body weight against his torso, head thrown back and slamming into his jaw, shaking his hand loose enough for her to slip away towards the dining room.

Hannibal was growing impatient, giving chase and catching a hard grip on the back of her neck, before slamming her head against the dining table.

Her fear finally overtook her attempts to stay rational in a hostile situation. She started panting, and finally tears were shed. "Oh God, how could I have been so wrong…" Her hands pushed against the table top, and he simply increased the pressure of his grip and held her down.

"Alana, let me share with you a story. Dear Will did in fact arrive here Friday night. But his quick mind finally saw what so few have. He pieced together that I was the Chesapeake Ripper."

Her struggling increased, "No, no. It can't be you, please, no." Her voice had turned soft, and she did start to cry in earnest.

"Yes, I am. And Will, sweet William did in fact try to kill me as well. But then, something marvelous happened."

Hannibal bent down, and whispered against her ear, "He decided, if you can't beat them, then join them."

"No, he'll stop you. He'll kill you when he comes to his senses. He's a good man!" She tried kicking out with her legs, before he slammed her head against the table again. Hard enough to disorient her, causing her limbs to go lax.

"Perhaps he was, but now he's an even better man than he was before. In fact, right on this very table, I nearly fucked him. It's a shame I'll have to sully it with your death, but I was

never going to let you leave."

He pushed her up, and flipped her hard onto her back, her head snapping hard against the wood. Her torso laid on the table, her legs still slumped over the edge, dangling. Tenderly, he brushed the hair out of her face, unfocused blue eyes staring at him.

"They're more solid now, almost like a crown…They're seeping in, staining your skin…" Alana whispered, before her head lolled to the side.

"Goodbye Alana Bloom," he whispered, taking a firm hold on her neck and squeezing hard. In her disoriented state, she didn't struggle, merely gasped as her airflow was restricted.

Alana Bloom died a quiet death, with only her killer present for comfort.

When her lips turned blue, and he was sure her heart was stopped, Hannibal stepped back. Alana always had a natural grace about her, and even death could not strip her of this. Her hair spread around her head, palms turned upward; she was even lovelier in death.

Such a shame he had to kill her, he had genuinely liked her candor. Yet Hannibal was well versed in human curiosity; once piqued, it was hard to dissuade. Alana must have had some doubts about Will's mental instability; enough to make the leap that he didn't just understand the way killer's thought, but actually thought as a killer. And that doubt would never leave her, merely fester. It was most likely a contributing factor of why she had taken to such great lengths to never be in a room alone with him. She never wanted to see the full expanse of his mind. But working closer with Jack Crawford had exposed her to it inadvertently. Hannibal did not appreciate the extra scrutiny on Will, and if he had a chance to affirm himself as the only person Will needed, all the better. What use did Will have for a friend if they could only suspect the worst of him? Hannibal didn't need Will to change himself, simply embrace what he had suppressed for too long.

He moved to the foyer and found Alana's coat. Searching her pockets, he found car keys and noticed his hands. Or more specifically, his fingers. Not the amount of dried blood from his previous wound, but the faint elongation of his fingernails. What startled him more though was how the tips were black, as if ink was spilled and flowed up towards his arm. Pocketing Alana's keys, he made his way to the bathroom. Turning on the light, he finally saw what perhaps the dearly departed Alana Bloom spoke of before she died. His shirt was still torn, stained with his own blood, chest visible. But he bypassed all of this to focus on the top of his head, the inky coloring flowing down along his scalp, nearly reaching his eyes. Hannibal did in fact have a large set of antlers, curling upwards in a graceful slope. Tentatively, he reached out a blackened hand and felt the solid weight of it in his palm. It was strange, he didn't necessarily feel any different. His head was not encumbered by the weight, in fact, he didn't feel them at all. Glancing at the doorway, he saw that it was too narrow for him to fit through…but he must have if he walked in. Taking stock of his reflection, he moved back out the door, and slowly walked back in, noting his antlers were still there in the mirror.

Hannibal didn't know what had brought on such a change, but he took deep even breaths to calm the elevated beat of his heart. Finally feeling calm, and firmly tucked back into his person suit persona, he saw the black recede from his fingertips. A quick look at the mirror showed the antlers becoming transparent before completely disappearing. It must have been

purely reactionary to his letting his more concealed tendencies have free reign; the liberation of his true self in every sense of the word. Having something else to share with Will, Hannibal smiled. Perhaps they were one step closer to discovering what had occurred to themselves. He wondered what William would look like, if he was the same. And if he was, oh, what lovely symmetry. Perhaps he only needed a bit of a push to achieve it. After all, evolution was far better than stagnation.

The doctor ran through a mental checklist of what he needed to do with his changed plans. It was early enough in the evening to set up something wonderful for his dear Will to find. Hannibal had more than enough time for his new design. He knew it wouldn't be quite well received, but as with all gifts, it was the thought that counts.

*****

Will was tired. Jack had kept the team busy with rush orders on everything. He sat in the lab, watching the forensics team buzz around processing samples. Will was pouring over photos, for once not holed up in his classroom. Beverly had insisted on it when she brought the large stack to him, dragging him into a lab adjacent to where Price and Zeller were processing Abigail's body. He was making notes for his report while she processed the flowers that had been found in Abigail's torso.

"Okay, but you and Alana, am I right? Take it from me, when you walk away, she is totally zeroed in on your cute butt," she laughed lightly as she separated the flowers based on type.

Will nearly choked, "W-what? I don't know what you're talking about, but Dr. Bloom and I aren't anything. We're colleagues, like you and me." He gave her a pointed look, focused on the bridge of her nose.

She gave him a sly smile, cocking her hip out, "Yeah, and how do you think I know she looks? I'm checking out your cute butt too." Beverly laughed as a small blush covered his face.

Will almost turned back to his photos, before he realized what she was doing. Her body language screamed false bravado, and her smirk was a little too exaggerated. She was trying to keep his mind in the present, not sucked into his own recesses where Hobbs had pulled him down to. He could see she was trying to keep his spirits up, or at least his mind from going somewhere he couldn't come back from. Will didn't have the heart to tell her that it was too late for that, but he was still touched by the effort. Beverly knew how hard the Minnesota Shrike case had hit him, and now with it continuing with the Copy Cat in their own backyard, that must have driven her to try and support him. She may not be the paddle that Hannibal was, but perhaps something akin to a life jacket, something to keep him afloat. Simply being there, supportive. It was such a simple thing though and Will felt a warmth. He felt like he had a friend.

“Well this cute butt is going to get some coffee, you want one?” He stood and stretched, shuffling his papers on the lab table he’d taken over.

She smiled, “Yeah, black with 2 sugars.”

Price and Zeller yelled from down the hall, “Same!”

Will laughed again, feeling it easier to do so for once while at work.

*****

The whole forensics team was gathered in the lab where Will had set up shop. They were looking through the photos, comparing it with its counterpart in Minnesota.

Will held a carry out tray filled with coffee cups and a small bag of doughnuts he got from one of the coffee shops on campus. Beverly quickly claimed the bag for first dibs. Handing out the cups, he noticed Zeller hesitating before quickly grabbing a cup.

“Our preliminary findings are that the MO was the same. Her organs---they were taken while she was alive,” Zeller took a quick sip.

“What the fuck Brian? You could have waited until after we ate! We’ve been working on this all day,” Beverly yelled out, finally settling on a chocolate donut.

Price laughed, taking the bag from her hands, “Well it doesn’t seem to have put you off eating.”

Zeller yelled back, “I’m trying to apologize to him, fuck,” he turned to Will, “So…yeah. I just wanted to say sorry for being an ass about it. I know you’re probably upset you couldn’t save her---”

“You are the fucking worst at apologies. Just shut up while you’re ahead.” Beverly cast a quick look at Will, offering a small smile.

“I’ve got to agree with Bev, you’re the absolute worst.” Price bit into his maple bar before turning to Will, “With your mind and our lab, we’ll catch him Will.”

“Yeah! Copy Cat better watch his back!” Beverly added, holding her half eaten donut up.

Zeller jumped in, “Yeah! I---”

Will took the bag off the table, shoving it into Zeller’s hands, “You might want to take Bev’s advice and stop while you’re ahead.” He took up his own coffee, drinking before adding, “Don’t even worry about it, you wouldn’t be a good investigator if you didn’t question things.”

Especially when he had been right about it being the Chesapeake Ripper. But no one needed to know that.

Zeller gave a quick snort as he picked out the jelly-filled donut, handing the bag toward Will. The bag Will knew only had one donut left. The one he had picked with Beverly in mind because it was cute. Sighing, he took the pink glazed with rainbow sprinkles donut and bit into it.

The calm was broken when several trainees brought in boxes of dvds, and set them in the media lab. Jack Crawford strode in after, with several files in hand.

"Well it's good to see you all getting caffeinated. We're going to have to pull an all-nighter. The higher ups are breathing down my neck for this case to be closed. There's been a lot of public outrage that Nicholas Boyle not only got away the first time, but that he was able to travel across state lines. We were able to get cooperation from many of the surrounding businesses and they've sent over their surveillance from Sunday into Monday morning."

More boxes were brought it. Price finally asked, "You want us to review all of them tonight?"

Jack smirked, "Yes. But I'll help."

The forensics team and Will quickly finished their snack before making it over to media lab where several large TVs were kept. They quickly set to work reviewing the security footage in all of its tedium for some small clue; whether Abigail was visible or if there was even a hint of Nicholas Boyle. It was even worse for Will since he knew the search would be useless.

Several hours passed in this manner. The monotony was only broken up by brief commentary of Baltimore's residents. And when Beverly had slipped her phone out of her pocket, quickly dialing and waiting for someone to pick up, frowning when no one did.

"Huh, weird. I tried calling Alana to help, but she didn't pick up."

Jack replied, "She has an early morning class and probably needs to get grading done. We'll recruit her tomorrow."

That seemed to satisfy Beverly as she went back to work.

Will felt the day catching up to him. It was probably doing something that he knew wouldn't matter that increased his fatigue. Turning toward Jack he said simply, "I'm going to catch a quick nap."

He was waved off easily. There was a couch on a far wall that he had used other times to catch a nap during busy days. Settling in, Will found sleep easy and dreamed a dream he would forget as soon as he woke. A dream of inky skin, long claws, and antlers as glorious as any crown.

Chapter End Notes

lol, this was supposed to end differently, but when Team Sassy Science ended up on the scene, they stole the show. I love their dynamics so much and I hope I captured their voices alright! I love stories where they are sort of friends with Will. Or have an orgy with him, whatev~ There was literally supposed to be like 2 paragraphs in the lab. Yeah right.

All of you are so amazing and supportive! Thank you for the kudos and comments! I took a lot of your ideas to heart. My original plan was that Will and Hannibal would never know what they were, so we would never know either. But a lot of you really wanted a greater supernatural aspect so I changed it up. Wendigos. Aww yeah~

Are you on tumblr? So am I!

everett-harte.tumblr.com

# Twist the Sinews of Thy Heart

Chapter Notes

Gah, how do people write multiple fics at once? Or so fast! lol.

I'm excited for this part, it's a real turning point.

Warnings: Graphic description of a murder. Character death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The night passed in much a similar fashion. Will had woken up and started up again with the menial task, Price tapping out to try and catch a quick nap on the same couch. They had all cycled through taking breaks, mostly to rest their eyes before headaches settled in. There weren't many developments beyond the hospital's own footage that showed Abigail scaling a wall to escape. There was no sight of her on the footage from local businesses and Will suspected there wouldn't be. She must have headed directly toward the residential suburbs rather than walking through downtown Baltimore; there would be no footage of her.

"I don't get it. Where was she even going? The hospital director said she had disappeared before, do you think it was possible she was meeting with Nicholas Boyle?" Jack asked as he leaned back in his chair, stretching his back.

"What? You mean a rendezvous? Oh yeah, let's talk about my dad's fucked up murders and how you're his biggest fan?" Beverly scoffed, "Obviously not, he ended up killing her right?"

This was something Will could work with.

"Maybe he tried to find a connection with Hobbs' golden ticket. And when he found he didn't have the same personal attachment, he finished Hobbs' work."

Jack turned to face Will, "Why do you think she would meet him in the first place? He tried to kill her in Minnesota at her house. Why would she feel safe enough to speak with him?"

"For that manner, how would she have even known to meet him? The hospital has a strict no outside communication rule," Price added.

"Well, she left several times before. She could have come across him and he could have figured out the best time to grab her. Were her disappearances random or followed a pattern?" Will asked. He already knew the answer from Hannibal.

Beverly found the file sent over from the hospital, flipping through, she finally answered, "Huh. The first few weeks she did leave randomly and Hannibal checked her out with a day

pass. But for the past few weeks, she left every Sunday night, missing her group therapy."

Jack seemed to perk up, "So it does stand to reason that she came into contact with him and set up when to meet."

Zeller scoffed, "Correlation does not equal causation, Jack. Just because something happened before an event doesn't mean it's related or caused it."

Once you got past the grating personality, Zeller was actually good at his job. Arrogant and egotistical, but still had good instincts, Will thought.

"So then you ascribe to Occam's razor in this instance? That she was out and Nicholas Boyle came across her by chance and took the opportunity to finish Hobbs' work?" he asked.

"The easiest solution fits. All we have to go on are unsubstantiated sightings of Boyle across the country, we're not even sure when he showed up here. Added to that, I don't see Abigail getting friendly with the guy that killed her friend," Zeller replied with a shrug.

"A crime of opportunity fits the profile. His sister was the first victim, the second was a friend of Abigail's that confronted him. And he's tried to get Abigail before, when she returned to her house." Price added.

Will turned to Jack, "I'm not seeing a connection between Abigail and Boyle from the scene. This was opportunistic at best. He can't stop his tendencies now and is just trying to finish what Hobbs started to give himself some respite." Complete bullshit, but the way everyone nodded gave the impression that they believed it.

There was a quick knock on a door that Beverly answered. A trainee handed her a note before running off. Reading it, Beverly paled as she strode further into the room.

"Alana Bloom didn't show up for her lecture. She didn't answer her phone and agents in the area went to her house. She's---she's dead."

As the words processed, Will felt his hearing fill with that white noise of blood flow as his thoughts turned internal. Dead. He had just seen her yesterday, whole and hale. He knew Jack would be quick to point to Nicholas Boyle, but Will knew that boogeyman was nothing but a clever patsy. There was only one true killer that Will could see doing this. He had no idea on his motive, but sure as fuck was going to find out.

"Will. Will! We need you with us," Jack yelled at him.

Quickly coming back, he pushed his glasses up and stared at the door, "We need to get to the scene. Alana Bloom needs justice and I need the scene to see to that."

Jack clapped his shoulder, giving a quick squeeze, "We'll catch whoever did this Will."

As the team all gathered up the equipment needed and set out, Will couldn't help but think that he didn't know if he'd be able to catch the person who did it. That was the problem when you finally had something you never thought you could have; you could never give it

up willingly. And he didn't think he could give up Hannibal, not even for Alana Bloom. All he wanted now was to find out why.

*****

Her house was already taped off, squad cars parked up and down the street, and a small crowd hoping to catch a glimpse of something huddled on the sidewalks. The team bustled through, forensics heading off to photograph the perimeter and entryways. Jack had been a rather stable presence, nearly hovering as they prepared to leave Quanitco, practically smothering as they walked up to the house. It would have been nice if not for what a departure it was from how he handled Abigail's death. Will suspected Jack was afraid his teacup was close to cracking. He couldn't be further from the truth, but Jack wasn't the only one. Beverly had kept casting Will concerned looks on the drive over. He supposed it should be a relief that his mental state was finally being considered, but the extra scrutiny wouldn't make this any easier. Already he could feel himself regressing; sweating profusely, feeling jittery, he even had to pop an aspirin as they entered the house. He wasn't sure he was ready to see her body. Those few moments that he actually felt detached from his work and grounded fled him.

The present agents directed Will up the stairs, to the second door on the left. Jack stayed downstairs to speak with the first agents on the scene. Will relished the brief moment of respite before he reached the doorway and entered.

It was like Elise Nichols, even down to the dark, brunette hair delicately splayed on the pillow. Alana was dressed in a white nightgown and tucked into her bed. It almost looked like he was intruding on her in the morning. Another, more buried part could almost imagine he had come back from an out of town case and arrived early enough in the morning to slip into bed with her. She would wake when she felt the bed dip, turning her head, she would whisper a soft, "Good Morning," punctuated with a quick smile.

Will quickly pulled back from that thought when he noticed her pale coloring and blue lips. As he got closer to the bed, he saw dark purple bruises on her neck. There were faint capillaries around her eyes that appeared to have ruptured, and Will had no doubt that the same occurrence would be found on her eyes. Alana had been strangled efficiently and quickly, and that shouldn't have made him relax as much as it should.

He took his glasses off and tucked them into his coat. Already, he knew sinking into Hannibal's mindset would be easy, but he felt a reluctance creep up that hadn't been there yesterday. He wasn't sure he wanted to know Hannibal's reasons for killing Alana; afraid it would color his memory of her. But Will needed to know why desperately.

Will stood beside the bed, taking in the obvious care that had been taken in tucking her in, the wrinkles smoothed out, the blankets pulled taut. He focused on her eyelashes as he felt the pendulum swing.

*She was a dear friend, perhaps she would have been more if I felt particularly inclined. But the complications would have led to a similar end. And it would have been such a shame to lose her over a triviality, especially when she was still so useful. But this was something more serious. This was a transgression that I could not let go so easily.*

*It was easy enough. In fact, her kill was one of the easiest I've ever had. She trusted me so completely, she came over as a friend and left as a message. For that is all this can be, a message. If I used the death of Cassie Boyle to show Will the face of the true killer, than this shows my own. For I am willing to do anything to protect what is mine, and William is most assuredly this. Even at the expense of friendships I've had for far longer than I've even known the empath, this is worth it. I won't lose what I had never hoped to have over the simple chance that she will act as I need her to. I deal with a stacked deck, and nothing is ever left to luck.*

*I can be a merciful monster when need be, and I was with this. She did not suffer unduly, and that will be the only consolation I can give to the one I know will see beyond the guise of this murder. Because this had to be done. The joy I took from this was reactionary to protecting what is mine; a feeling I haven't felt in a very long time.*

*I need you to see. See what I truly am and what you can be. Do you see Will?*

Will felt himself coming back to the crime scene, one piece at a time. When he opened his eyes again, he didn't see Alana anymore; it was an offering, a gift. Hannibal protected Will, of the particulars, he was unsure, but he knew the doctor was not one to kill without a reason or purpose. But the fact remained, what had Alana done to make Hannibal act in such a manner?

Jack gave a quick knock to the door before entering, "Will, how are you doing up here? Have you found anything?"

He slipped his glasses back on before responding, "It was difficult, and I…I'm unsure why she was targeted. But it was the Copycat, Jack."

His boss nodded, "Yes, this is exactly like the Shrike kill we found in Minnesota. Why do you think he placed Alana like this?"

Will didn't even have to feign the flinch that shuddered over him. Why. 'Why' was the one question he didn't have the answer to in regards to Hannibal. But for Nicholas Boyle, he had an easy enough answer already brewing in his mind.

"Hobb's put her back as an apology, that he couldn't honor her. This, this is the Copycat honoring his mentor. He did what Hobbs couldn't do to Abigail, and this…this is him following his mentor's footsteps."

Jack looked skeptical, "You were the one that shot Hobbs and tracked him down. Why hasn't he tried to avenge Hobbs then?"

Will focused on Jack's ear, "If he had been watching Abigail, he must have seen Alana with her and figured out her schedule. Just as Abigail's death was opportunistic, Alana's was as

well.  She became a target based on proximity, not necessarily relevance."

That seemed to satisfy Jack as he stepped back into the hall and called an agent to get forensics to start processing the scene.  Jack gave him a quick shoulder pat before telling him to take the rest of the day off.  Will nodded, for once grateful of the near smothering from his boss, and made his way out of Alana's house.  He couldn't help but note it was the first time he had ever been there, and the last time he ever would.

He made it outside and saw the forensics team packing up their cameras.  Before he had a chance to tell them goodbye, he heard a voice that always had the habit of ruining his day.

"Returning to the scene of the crime Mr. Graham?" Freddie Lounds asked at the edge of the crime scene tape, ever present camera in hand.

"Just doing my job Ms. Lounds," he responded, perfectly willing to simply leave before she spouted off more half-truths.

"Because I find it rather suspect that the day after I questioned Dr. Bloom of your whereabouts this past weekend, she ends up dead the next day."

He took a deep breath, adjusting his glasses, "I did not kill Dr. Bloom.  You'd be better off doing actual journalism and focusing on the Copycat killer."

She smirked, "Perhaps I already am."

Will felt a familiar tiredness settle over him.  He never could win could he?  No matter how many cases he closed, no matter how many killers he brought to justice, he would always be suspect based on his pathology.  The same thing that helped him do the most good, condemned him in the same breath.

"Hey!  How many times have you been sued for slander Freddie?  Because I'm pretty sure Will was at Quantico all night with the science department and his boss, you know, Jack Crawford?  Actually doing work to try and catch this serial killer," Beverly responded.

"You know, I think it may be 6, Bev.  Freddie Lounds is a rather naughty girl," Price answered.

Zeller shoulder his camera bag, "Naw, you know what we should be asking, is 'Where were you last night Freddie?'"

The reporter gave a rather inelegant splutter.

"If you'll excuse us, we have actual work to do in reality, and not in fiction," Price said as he gathered his crime scene kit.

"Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence," Freddie simpered.

Beverly rolled her eyes, "Ugh, you're so lame."

Will couldn't help the laugh that bubbled out. The rest of the team let out their own chuckles and laughs. Freddie simply disappeared into the crowd with a flick of red ringlets.

He couldn't help but say, "Thanks guys. It's been a rough week."

Price and Zeller give quick nods, probably slightly uncomfortable with the gratitude, before they set off into the house.

Beverly gave him a rather solid punch in the arm, "What are friends for?" That careful look of concern still shaded her eyes, but Will saw the genuine feeling of affection behind the careful barrier of his glasses. She gathered up her own kit, before sauntering into the house. He was once again struck by her bravado, her shield against these murders as much as Will's glasses. She knew Alana too. Just as the rest of the team did. Perhaps when you lost something, it made you try and hold onto what you have already. Alana may be gone, but they could prevent Will from becoming just as lost in his own mind. The thought that they cared was enough for him.

The 'why' of the scene still plagued and terrified him. He still felt jittery and unsure. But if Abigail's death assured Will of Hannibal's devotion, Alana's death assured him of his love. And the settled warmth in his chest shouldn't have been as soothing as it was.

*****

Will didn't head directly home. Instead, he made his way back to the academy to pick up old case files he was going to work into his class curriculum. He thought about stopping by Hannibal's office or at least calling him, but eventually abandoned the idea. What they had to discuss would take longer than Hannibal's patient schedule allowed and he wanted to face Hannibal and read as much as he could from what he didn't say.

When he got home, the first thing he noticed was his front door wide open, his dogs lazing on the porch and getting afternoon sun. He quickly parked, taking a head count before unholstering his gun and approaching the doorway.

"I suggest whoever you are, you leave before I really get angry," he yelled into his house, gun held at the ready.

He was surprised to hear a rather familiar voice answer. Surprised enough to put his gun back into its holster.

"William, impeccable timing as usual. I arrived here after receiving a call from Jack and thought to wait for you. But who should I find already inside, snooping through your things," a rather calm Hannibal Lecter said.

As he stepped through the doorway, he was met with the sight of Freddie Lounds duct-taped to one of his dining room chairs, a faint trail of blood trickling down her forehead. She was

panting harshly, but wasn't screaming, which frankly surprised him. He finally saw what had probably spooked her into compliance; the game processing kit was laid open on one of his armchairs.

He smiled in memory, "For the cannibal-on the go?"

Hannibal answered warmly, "Never leave home without it."

Finally turning towards the doctor's voice, Will saw he was wearing a strange raincoat.

"What the fuck are you wearing?"

Hannibal looked like he was tempering down a laugh. Which made the weird plastic outfit even more ridiculous.

"I've found it much easier on my dry cleaning bills if my suits are well protected during certain activities."

Freddie took that moment to start trying to reason with Will, "You need to get me out of here. I believe you Will, he's the one that's killing everyone. You and me can get out of this."

Will cocked his head in curiosity, how quickly her tune changed. Earlier she was so quick to condemn him, now she saw him as her only way for survival.

"Ms. Lounds, why were you always so fixated on me as a killer? What did I do besides my job that unsettled you so?"

Her eyes skittered away, before they focused back on him. "Even if we're all in occupations that draw psychopaths, you are particularly…good at your job."

He gave a hollow laugh, and turned back to Hannibal, "What were you planning before I got here?"

"I planned to slice her tongue out. She's been a very chatty lamb recently. Have you read her latest article?" Hannibal grabbed his tablet and pulled up Tattle Crime.

Will shook his head, before taking the tablet handed to him. There were photos splashed across page from past crime scenes. They showed him, the science team, Jack Crawford, and even one of Hannibal and Will. A large headline read, 'Does the FBI have a Pet Serial Killer?' The article speculated that the Copycat killer was simply a construct from an employee of the FBI. The murders only occurring after the federal investigation started on the Shrike, perhaps to draw the public away from the unsolved case. It called into question the whole BAU and that if a killer was allowed in such a secure position, what else could have been tampered with? How far was Jack Crawford willing to go to catch those he saw as guilty? And wasn't it strange that the new murders continued near the FBI headquarters? But what really got to Will was the caption under the cluster of photos, speculating if one of them had seen too much and finally went from reenacting to recreating.

Angry didn't cut it, he was furious, "I don't particularly care what you say about me, but this brings doubt to the FBI and undermines every single case BAU has processed. Are you happy you've given defense attorneys another way to jam up the court system with bogus claims of evidence tampering? You have no idea of the ramifications of what you've done, and the fact that you don't care makes it even worse. We collect evidence and find the truth, something that you have no experience with."

Her gaze turned sharp, "I knew it; you are involved somehow. And taking in this standoff we find ourselves in, I think I found your partner. How easy you claim the high ground, but I wonder if you have been truthful lately with Jack Crawford."

Will paced along the edge of his living room, "What do you know of truth, Ms. Lounds? Was there any truth at all in your article? Or were you simply trying to get more page views?"

She shrugged as much as she could taped in her chair, "Truth is relative Mr. Graham, as well you should know. Did Dr. Bloom find out the truth before you killed her?"

His fists clenched, "No, I---"

"Because it seems to me that Alana Bloom had the worst luck of all. She cared for you and that care made her hesitate when even she could see the truth. I don't know what occurred, but I could see it in her eyes yesterday, she knew that you were a killer. If she had gone directly to Jack Crawford, none of this would have happened. But thinking the best of you killed her."

Will's headache pounded, "I didn't, she didn't…"

Freddie leaned forward, the near dry blood on her forehead blending in with her hair. "You might not have strangled her with your own hands, but don't think for one moment your hands are clean of her death."

He felt faint, how was it that even tied up, Freddie fucking Lounds had gained the upper hand? Will felt like he was losing himself to a self-inflicted guilt; he still hadn't answered the question of why Alana was killed, had he? He could feel it resonating through his skull; Freddie was right on this. Alana had thought the worst of him for no other reason than listening to Freddie Lounds. His heart ached. The woman he had considered a friend and once a possible love interest, was just like all the others in the end.

Will would have continued into a spiral of self-pity if he didn't feel a cool steel handle slipped into his hand. Looking down, he saw it was the scalpel the doctor had gifted him, plastic cap and all. Glancing up, he met the eyes of Hannibal. A quiet rage was settled on his features, but his eyes reflected that careful control slipping, morphing into the monster he kept so carefully tucked away in polite company.

But their company was anything but polite.

Will slipped the protective cap off with a flick of his thumb, bringing it up to his face to admire the shine of stainless steel.

Freddie leaned back, “That wasn’t a challenge you know. You don’t have to kill anyone Will, you have nothing to prove to me or Dr. Lecter.” Her eyes flick to the scalpel up to Will’s face. Something she saw there must have terrified her, as her gaze drifted upwards.

“O-oh God…” she whispered, blue eyes wide in fear.

“Dr. Lecter, I think you were right. This lamb has been rather chatty hasn’t she?” Will advanced, scalpel in hand.

“Yes, she has. And what’s to be done about that?” the satisfaction curled and colored Hannibal’s words.

“No, don’t!” she yelled as Will gripped her jaw tightly. Freddie tried kicking out, but her legs had been taped to the legs of the chair.

Will leaned close, bringing the scalpel up to her eye level. “You always thought the worst of me, maybe it’s time for me to show you that I am indeed the sum of my parts.”

She thrashed her head, trying to dislodge his grip, “What the fuck are you? You’re a fucking monster!”

He struck quickly, pulling her jaw open enough to dislocate, slipping his fingers in quickly to slide the blade through the pink muscle. She gurgled and choked on the large stream of blood, all the while, her eyes stayed locked on Will in terror.

Her shuddering and convulsing slowed as the blood flow increased, dribbling out of her mouth along with severed tongue, down her chin. Will stepped back, finally feeling like he could breathe. His headache was gone, and that strange feeling of guilt he felt for Alana dissipated. It was no use worrying over something he couldn’t change. He couldn’t change her final view of him and he couldn’t change her death.

Will felt Hannibal slip the scalpel from his hand, before he brought up the empath’s hand, placing a soft kiss to the blood stained knuckles.

It would have been a rather sweet moment if Will hadn’t noticed the elongated fingers and dark shadow spreading up his arm.

“W-what is this?” He snatched his hand back, holding it in front of him, before he brought the other up to see that it was the same. Will turned to look at Hannibal, noticing something similar happening. An inky shadow was spreading across his features, turning the skin black and shiny. What really caught his attention however, was the large rack of antlers Hannibal was now sporting. Turning toward the window and catching his own reflection, Will saw his own set of antlers.

“Holy fuck, we’re wendigos.”

Chapter End Notes

So, you got your murder husbands. Wendigo Murder Husbands! :D

And there's something I want to quickly address. I know there's been a lot of female deaths, but the next few are going to be male. So don't worry, Hannibal and Will are equal opportunity serial killers, lol.

everett-harte.tumblr.com

# Love is just a Bloodsport

Chapter Notes

> This chapter killed me. I just could not write it. Not like writer's block, but the words weren't flowing well. My frustration may have come out through Will; he's rather sassy this chapter.
>
> I'm excited for some upcoming scenes! We're going to get really fun again! But with more murder, yay!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had never been his intention to kill again so soon, especially before he got to speak to Will about the death of Alana Bloom. But naturally, Freddie Lounds had to appear somewhere she was not supposed to. He headed over after receiving a call from Jack telling him of Alana's death and if he felt up to it, could he check in on Will? Hannibal made all the right responses to such news, ultimately agreeing to check on Will after his last appointment. The doctor had arrived to find Ms. Lounds rifling through Will's fly lures and upsetting the careful arrangement of materials on his desk. The string and feathers in disarray across the tabletop filled him with unbridled fury that he had to push down to ensure his rationality.

It was easy enough to incapacitate her, she was far too focused on her task to notice him come up behind and slamming her head into the desk. Restraining her to a chair all the easier with the duct tape he found amongst Will's dismantled boat engines. The dogs were, he supposed watchdogs in the sense that they had watched all these proceedings before wandering out to find warm sunny spots outside. He could appreciate their calm attitudes and found their quiet, unobtrusive company rather soothing.

When she stirred, she was quick to speak, "I think I get it now. Will didn't kill Abigail or Alana; you did. How long has this partnership been going on Dr. Lecter?"

He ignored her, choosing to head out to his car to slip into his plastic suit and gather the hard case that contained his tools. When he reentered the house, after thoughtfully stepping over sleeping dogs, he was not surprised to see her trying to twist out of the tape binding her.

"Did you know Ms. Lounds that I am quite an avid reader of *Tattle Crime*. In fact, before I headed over here, what should I see in my news alerts? A new article on the Copycat murders. Tell me, would you still stand by the outlandish claims now that you've stumbled upon a different truth?"

"I stand by my recent speculations; because that's all they are. But I'm thinking, perhaps I had the wording wrong. The headline should have been, "Provisional FBI Agent Unleashes Pet Serial Killer". That sums this whole fucked up situation far better I think."

He set his kit on a nearby chair, making a bit of a show pulling out blades and saws, holding them up to the light to examine their meticulously sharpened edges. Freddie shifted in her chair more anxiously, a small trail of blood moving from her scalp to forehead.

Hannibal held a thin blade with a curved tip, a skinning knife. "Will did set me after Abigail. And I killed her simply because he wished it. I killed Alana because she was a threat to Will." The doctor grabbed a fistful of her red curls, exposing the back of her neck. He turned the blade to have sharp tip out, running it from behind her ear, along her scalp line, finishing at the other ear, leaving a thick trail of blood.

"And I do believe you are dangerous to Will's continued well-being." Hannibal flipped the blade and traced over the existing line, deepening the cut. "Now, how should the Chesapeake Ripper handle such a thing?"

He would give her a modicum of respect, she didn't scream nor beg, simply started to pant harshly. Hannibal would have continued slicing along her skin if he hadn't heard the familiar car engine outside. Will had arrived.

*****

Watching Will kill was something he knew he would always savor and enjoy. It was vastly different being a spectator to something he knew he would have done; the hands that were not his own moving in such a methodical way. He wasn't pleased at the way Ms. Lounds unsettled William so easily. Hannibal knew he would have to discuss the death of their mutual friend, but the sharp way the reporter spoke of it wounded Will. There was nothing that could have stopped Hannibal from exacting a painful death from her except himself. And he was pleased he did so. He gave Will the power to control his fate; the agent taking up the scalpel easily and wielding it with more confidence than he had when he'd used a similar tool on Hannibal. As Freddie Lounds sat slumped in her chair bleeding out, the true gift presented itself. He could see the antlers shimmering into solid form atop Will's curls. Oh, he was so delighted. What a gift indeed.

And then Will uttered a word he wasn't quite familiar with.

"Pardon? But what is a 'wendigo' and how can you identify us as such?"

Will glanced away from the window, looking down at his hands thoughtfully. "I made a passing mention of it the first night, but I never thought---" he closed his fist feeling the long nails tuck against his palm.

The empath lifted his eyes back to Hannibal, probably noting the receding supernatural features; the antlers he had were slowly dissipating based on his reflection in the window.

"I always liked movies as a kid. I was able to take part in normal interactions as an observer. Later, when I was a teen, I fixated on horror movies. Not for the violence, but how telling

they were of our fears. What monster was portrayed and how, I liked those sort of things."

"But, let me just say, vampires have fangs, wendigos have antlers; they're standard horror conventions." Will allowed a small smile to spread, "And now we have somewhere to start from."

Finally William had his answer to the question he thought they would never solve. And Hannibal had his question answered if Will would have a similar evolution to his own. Freddie Lounds had finally proved useful. Perhaps he'd send a floral arrangement to her funeral, it would be polite.

Will furrowed his brow, "You don't seem surprised by this," he pointed upward with an elongated finger. "Ah, that's what you were coming over to tell me then."

Hannibal made a noise of assent, finally found his chance to address what Will already knew, "That and I wanted to speak with you about Alana. I was hoping to catch you before she was found, but Jack's call to me proved otherwise."

Will appeared to be reverting back, his hands returning to their normal human state, the antlers fading into a faint shadow. "I think I already know, but---I wouldn't mind hearing it from you." He glanced back to the armchair where a now dead Freddie Lounds sat. "That might have to wait though. Jack gave me the rest of the day off and she was accusing me of being a killer at the scene. There will be someone else to put two and two together."

Hannibal smiled, a brilliant idea coming to mind. "Take off your clothes and go wash up. There is much to do before we can have our discussion."

Unfazed by the orders, Will stripped in the living room, leaving his clothes in a pile before stalking upstairs to the shower to wash off the blood spray. Hannibal did appreciate the unhindered view as he disappeared up stairs, but returned to his task just as fast. He pulled out a folded piece of plastic sheeting from his kit, spreading it out before he took the skinning knife and cut the duct tape holding her upright. From there he fell into the ease of routine; he wrapped her body in the plastic before placing her body in his trunk. He found bleach underneath the sink in Will's kitchen and made quick work of cleaning up the floor with dish towels and wiping down the chair and their tools. The overly clean smell would surely dissipate once the pack settled in; wet dog did have a tendency of permeating everything. His last task was to throw the bloodied clothes, towels, and bits of duct tape into a trash bag he took out and put in his car along with his protective suit. Freddie Lounds' presence would be undetectable.

Will came down the stairs, dressed in a casual plaid button up and jeans. He slowed his gait when he noticed the complete cleanup of the living room. Even Will's dogs were slowly starting to wander back in, finally tiring of laying outside.

"That was fast, I couldn't have been more than 20 minutes."

The doctor suppressed a smirk before he fished out his car keys from his pocket. Attached to the key ring, a pair of keys on a separate ring were detached and held out to Will. Stunned,

his William held out his hand wordlessly to accept them. Hannibal couldn't help but clasp that quivering hand between his own, curling those delicate fingers around his keys.

"These are my office and house keys. I want you to go to my house and wait for me. Let me handle everything."

Will looked away for a moment, "I want to make a joke about you having more experience with this, but I'm not sure if I would mean the body disposal or the homicide."

Hmm. That wouldn't do. He brought Will's hand up, pressing a soft kiss to his knuckles. He wasn't typically as physically demonstrative as this, or when he did use such gestures, it had been for more manipulative ends. There was a compulsion within him to soothe Will in his distress, perhaps a byproduct of his actual affection for the man. The accompanying blush was not unappreciated either in such circumstances.

"I would hope you meant my obvious talent in evading capture. It's rather useful in such instances."

Will huffed out a laugh, "Well, maybe that's one of the reasons I decided to keep you."

Hannibal's grip on Will's hand increased, "And I want you to keep these." He released his hand and moved to gather up his kit, tucking the cleaned skinning knife back in place. The doctor even took a moment to tidy up the desk when he put Will's scalpel back on the tabletop.

Will pocketed the keys before moving over to his bookcase and pulling out a set of his own keys, before wordlessly handing them to Hannibal. The doctor was pleased by the quid pro quo of their relationship; it would always find a way to equalize. Will gave a soft smile before he started moving about, putting together an overnight bag, and gathering up his messenger bag before pausing.

"Not to ruin the mood or anything, but what about my dogs? You sort of killed off my usual dog sitter."

Will, always so pragmatic.

The doctor only smiled, "I did say let me handle everything," he glanced to the dogs already settled in their beds.

When he was met with silence, he sighed. "No Will, I'm not going to kill your dogs."

He was met with a derisive sniff, whether it was from Will or one of the dogs, he couldn't be sure.

Hannibal supposed he deserved that. His track record toward 'taking care of things' did tend to end in homicide.

*****

Will wasn't sure what to do at Hannibal's house or even when the doctor would return. He mostly set up shop in the study, taking out his laptop and finishing his grading. Part of him was innately pleased that Hannibal trusted him enough to leave him in his house by himself, let alone give him keys. And another part was happy that he didn't have to deal with the mess he made of Freddie Lounds. He had vague ideas of what he would have done to her body. Perhaps burn the body until she was unrecognizable as human, so the outside matched the inside. But Will could acquiesce that it was different imagining something and actually doing it; the difference between theory and practice. For all his years of working with homicides, and even if he knew how to not to get caught, he simply didn't have the actual experience. Killing Hannibal had proved that; he was far too messy, and he didn't plan out beyond the actual kill. For fuck's sake, Hannibal had his own murder suit. Though, perhaps he would learn through; from one of the most prolific serial killers on the east coast. And that thought shouldn't have made his dick twitch in interest.

He focused on his classwork. It was something to keep busy. It kept his mind off what Hannibal could be doing with Freddie's body or from giving more than a fleeting thought about Alana's last moments when she knew the truth of what sort of man her mentor actually was.

He grew bored when he had finished his lesson plans 6 weeks in advance. Standing up and cracking his back, he went down to the kitchen. It was getting late and even if he wasn't on the same level of culinary expertise as Hannibal, he was going to try and make something.

Opening the fridge, he found a bowl of what looked like ground beef, but he knew was something else, or rather someone else. Taking it out and setting it on the counter, he had the irrational urge to know whether it was Abigail or Alana. He almost let out a hysterical laugh before he calmed himself down. Whoever it was, it'd be a waste not to use it. And who doesn't want to be useful?

He made up his mind when he visited the pantry. Will found a small bag of dried spaghetti pushed into the back. He supposed even foodies had days were they couldn't find the time to make fresh noodles. Will pulled out onions and garlic and set to dicing them and adding them to a sauce pan to brown up before adding the meat. He found if he focused on the meat as simply food, it wasn't difficult to brown it. There was a definite dichotomy of feeling, knowingly eating human: when it was your own lungs versus someone else's.

Will set out a pot of water to boil on the stove. He found after much searching, a jar of what looked and tasted like tomato paste from the fridge. He poured some of it to the meat, adding some water to help make a sauce. Already, he knew it wouldn't come close to anything Hannibal could make, but he hoped the seasoning in the meat would infuse the sauce. He tried not to think that he had basically made ketchup, and added the spaghetti to the now boiling water.

He heard the distant sound of a car door closing, prompting him to quickly clean up the mess he'd made of the counters. For some reason, Hannibal seemed to be one of those people that cleaned as he went, rather than waiting until the end. And some part of himself wanted Hannibal to know that he cared about the household he had built up and wanted to respect the

space he had been graciously allowed to be a part of. He went back to stirring his meat sauce and heard the front door open.

And he pushed down the thought that he was acting like such a good house husband, making dinner for his spouse after a long day at work. Spaghetti after a long day of murdering.

A small laugh that escaped him was what greeted Hannibal when he entered the kitchen. The smile that spread across the doctor's face assured Will that his thoughts ran along a similar vein.

"I see you've had as productive a day as I have." He stepped over to the stove, peering over Will's shoulder, "You made a *ragù alla bolognese.* How lovely."

"Hmm…yes." Will continued stirring, "Could you drain the pasta?"

They fell back into that strange ease they had the in most of their tandem actions now; Hannibal drained the noodles and Will got plates, neither bumping into each other in the kitchen. But the doctor was quick to take control of the plating.

"It's only fair that I serve since you cooked. Perhaps you could pick a wine and get silverware?"

Will was fast to set the table, needing the extra time to try and figure out what sort of fucking wine went with *ragù alla bolognese.* Were people a red meat or white meat? He spent longer looking at the vast selection in the wine cellar than necessary, deciding on a merlot simply because he liked the taste.

When he reentered the dining room, it was to the lovely scene of Hannibal sitting and waiting for him at the table. Their plates were already in place, the sauce an elegant splash against a soft nest of noodles, topped with grated parmesan and diced basil. It was far better looking than anything Will could have done. Hannibal took the wine bottle from him and uncorked it easily before pouring into their wine glasses.

"Good company and good food, what more could I ask for?" Hannibal said, smile hidden behind the rim of his wine glass.

"Well, neither of those have been verified quite yet."

"They aren't mutually exclusive things in my mind. As long as you're by my side, I know I'll have one and the other will present itself in due time."

"God, you are a romantic," Will busied himself with eating some of his spaghetti, "This actually came out pretty good. Did you add anything to it while I was away?" He twirled more noodles on his fork.

Hannibal took his time to carefully do the same, "No, only the garnish. But I suppose it could be the seasoning in the meat."

Will paused, taking a moment to gather his thoughts by sipping his wine, "Would it be crass to ask who this was? Abigail or Alana?"

A rather pleased look passed the doctor's face, perhaps in finally having another to share this with, "It's Abigail. I was going to make her into sausage, but this is just as fitting. She did end up feeding you," he ended with a smirk.

Will took another bite, knowing Hannibal was watching. That pleased look that passed his face returned and settled. And that shouldn't have been as exciting as it was.

They ate in relative silence, perhaps simply enjoying each other's company. But Will couldn't help but ask the question, "Was Freddie right? Did Alana think I was the killer?"

Hannibal took up his wine glass, "Yes. She came here and started accusing you of acting differently. What made her question your involvement was the call you made to her to have her look after your dogs. It seemed uncharacteristic to her for you to act so spontaneous."

He sipped at his wine, "I spoke to her about our change in relationship in an effort to explain away her fears, but I'm afraid she wasn't supportive of us as a couple. She threatened to go to Jack or Freddie with her concerns and I had to act to protect you."

Well fuck. That explained that didn't it? He took up his own glass and finished it off.

"Do I want to know what you did with Freddie?"

That smirk returned, "I believe she would do better as a surprise. Something lovely to start your day off with."

"Is this where I say any day I see your face is a lovely day, or is that your line?" Will couldn't help being a smart ass; his humor had often been a great way to diffuse situations that made him uncomfortable. And being the focus of such an intent ardor left him feeling out of sorts.

"To see your face in the morning would be the best way to ensure a lovely day," Hannibal finished off his wine, "And you are spending the night."

"That was an awful line; I'm going to head up to your bedroom before I change my mind."

Will heard laughter behind him as he made his way upstairs. He heard Hannibal's steps catch up, not far behind.

*****

Will was confident enough in himself to acknowledge that this might have been his longest and most successful relationship. And it was with a cannibalistic serial killer. And it had only been 5 days. And had 3 murders under its belt. The irony did not escape him.

But feeling the soft way Hannibal kissed him, like something to be savored and treated not as something delicate, but precious. That was a feeling that he had never experienced.

Hannibal cupped his face and thumbed at his cheek bones, seeming to enjoy the scratch of stubble. Will took the initiative to unbutton and unbuckle Hannibal's clothes. It was a blur from the doorway to the bed. But Will managed to peel Hannibal's shirt off, actually getting the top cuff buttons undone before he tried to slip it off. His slacks were trickier when Hannibal pulled away to slip off his shoes and socks, leaving him in only his boxer briefs.

"Always so impatient," he murmured as he near stalked towards Will. He grabbed at the empath's hips before crowding him towards the bed, laying him out and unbuttoning and pulling down his pants and boxers. His cock sprung up, pink and flushed, only visible long enough for Will to notice it being engulfed by Hannibal's mouth.

"F-fuck," he whispered, tugging at his own shirt before realizing he had more fucking buttons to work through.

Hannibal was as fucking thorough and meticulous in blowjobs as he was in everything he did. He pressed the head to the roof of his mouth, teasing the bottom edge with a slide of his tongue. He swallowed it down, brushing the back of his throat before setting a rhythm of sucking and bobbing. Will had managed to push his arms out of the sleeves of his shirt, tossing it wherever the fuck it landed.

"You know, the past few days, I couldn't help but think on how you changed me. Before, I'd have been horrified to know you killed someone because I asked. But I knew when you killed to protect me---" Hannibal gave a particularly sharp suck, "I-I knew, I'd kill for you too."

The sucking stopped, Hannibal pulled off and crawled up until he was eye level with Will. "I'll always kill for you; those that stand in our way or even gods themselves. No one will tear us apart."

And Will couldn't help but rise up on his elbows to kiss along Hannibal's jaw, nipping at the corner of his mouth before hooking his leg onto the doctor's hip and flipping their positions.

"Get the fucking lube."

There was some shifting around as Hannibal seemed to scramble to the bedside table to pull out a tube. Will would never tire of unsettling Hannibal with his forwardness. Perhaps the doctor was more used to having to take the lead in such things.

He resettled on the doctor's thighs, feeling his erection rubbing against his own through his briefs. Cool fingertips breeched him, rubbing along the rim before delving further in.

The slight stretch felt good, "You know, once we had more of the pieces, it wasn't hard for me to figure out what we were. Wendigos are usually created from cannibalism. When I saw the antlers I knew. But do you know what made me really sure?"

Hannibal added another finger, "Hmm, what was the last piece?"

Will smiled and leaned down on Hannibal, "It was the fucking greed. They're known for never being satisfied. I connected it to how I came back. How much I wanted you to die,

how desperately I wanted your blood on my hands. I knew later when I couldn't get enough of your attention." He kissed Hannibal, sucking on his bottom lip as he pulled at the waistband of Hannibal's briefs, pulling them down enough to uncover him.

Hannibal pulled away, taking the time to add slick to his cock. "I wanted you so desperately when I knew you were willing to kill. And you were so beautiful and vengeful, I knew I would do anything to have you, even kill everyone around you so all you had was me." His fingers stretched further, twisting to spread more lube, before he started to push in.

"Fuck," Will moaned, canting his hips to slowly start pushing down. "Sometimes you're so intense in your emotions, I feel like I'll be overwhelmed by you." He started to rock his hips in a slow rhythm, "But sometimes, with your actions---I don't know if I want to kill you or fuck you."

Hannibal gripped hard at his hips, pulling him down to meet his thrusts, "We're wendigos; we're meant to be greedy for flesh in all forms." He smirked when Will laughed, gripping his shoulders for added leverage.

They chased their pleasure and came not long after, coiled around each other, greedy for touch. And if Will was being honest, there was nowhere else he'd rather be.

*****

Will vaguely remembered waking briefly to Hannibal leaving the bed. He placed a kiss on Will's forehead before leaving the room. The empath had a vague recollection of him saying something about breakfast. He stayed in bed though, relishing the early hour and knowing he still had more than enough time to get to work. He would have dozed back if he hadn't heard voices downstairs. Getting out of bed, he slipped on the closest shirt. Buttoning it up, he noted it was Hannibal's white button up and let a quick smile pass. He stepped into his boxers, feeling the sticky feeling of cum and sweat on his thighs and promised himself a shower as soon as he figured out who the fuck was ruining his morning.

It didn't take long for him to hear the voices clearly.

"He wasn't at his home though. I went and I only found a dog walker feeding his dogs, saying he didn't know where he was. The editor of *Tattle Crime* is on my ass saying Freddie was worried about Will being the Copycat. And when she didn't return from reporting on the latest crime scene, a scene I have witnesses saying they argued…what am I supposed to think Dr. Lecter?"

Will took that as his cue to walk down the stairs. "You're supposed to trust your top profiler Jack. You're supposed to deny baseless claims." Stepping into the living room, he relished Jack's look of surprise.

He sighed, “I went to Hannibal’s office to talk after the scene. He invited me over for dinner, we grieved Alana, and one thing led to another. I was here all night Jack.” Will tugged at the cuffs before folding his arms, feeling the collar sliding down to show his collar bone and shoulder.

Hannibal joined in, “I was simply following up on your suggestion to check on Will. We both were friends with Alana and needed someone to talk to. Would you care to join us for breakfast?”

Will had never seen Jack clear out so fast. He claimed he had to organize a search and gave a quick apology, thrown out as Hannibal walked him out.

The doctor returned with a smile, “I believe that went well.”

“I need a fucking shower, I can feel your cum dripping out.”

Hannibal’s smile was undeterred. “You’re so charming in the morning. Let me make you some coffee, hmm?”

Chapter End Notes

Ooh, we're going to get to my favorite arc from season 1 :D

# Somebody told me that you had a boyfriend.

Chapter Notes

This is a bit more of me working through the finale feels I have. You'll see what I mean in a particular conversation between a blonde psychiatrist and a dog hoarder.

Warnings: A crime scene is described.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will was far better after a shower and a cup of coffee. Hannibal knew he only turned prickly when he felt cornered and couldn't fault him. He would have preferred if he hadn't shown up half-dressed; an irrational urge to keep him from prying eyes rising up. Even if the view wasn't so different from that morning he showed up with breakfast at his hotel room in Minnesota so long ago, it was vastly different now. Will was being suspected once again for murder by someone close, and at this point, Hannibal was unsure he could kill and get away with it. Jack was too important to the BAU to be dealt with in his usual fashion. The best option would be to try the subtle manipulations that Hannibal was known for.

Will set off for work only when Hannibal assured him he had hired the all-inclusive dog walker that Jack had run into at his house. He would feed his dogs and take them out whenever Will's schedule made it necessary. He came highly recommended from one of his acquaintances at the opera and handing him the business card seemed to placate Will's ire. Hannibal had a few hours yet until his first appointment. Which was precisely why he was surprised by the knock on his office door.

Bedelia Du Maurier arrived in all her icy beauty. Her placid façade was something he found as enchanting as it was repelling. She wasn't quite as fun to play with once she figured out his game, she even tried to leave her profession in an attempt to dissuade him. How could he just abandon his therapy? He'd made so much *progress* after all.

She was rather quick to the point, outlining that she was ending their professional relationship.

Bedelia appeared conflicted, as if fighting her own self-preservation instincts and trying to remain strong while in front of a predator.

"It wasn't difficult for me to come to the conclusion that you were involved with the death of Alana Bloom. You're not the only one that reads *Tattle Crime*, Hannibal. I saw the photo of Will Graham and Dr. Bloom walking away from Abigail's crime scene arm in arm, and the next day she was dead. I am not one to malign you of petty jealously, but I am assured enough of your character that it certainly colored your perception of her. What did Alana Bloom do to make you throw away a relationship over a decade old?"

She was always rather blunt in her observations. “You are continuing to suggest that I am obsessed with Will Graham? That I’m letting it drive my actions? I wonder if you are able to identify such behavior based on personal experience. Was it you or your former patient that was obsessed with the other? I suppose it is of no consequence since you terminated the relationship professionally and rather permanently.”

That façade of hers wavered before she shored herself up, “I've had to draw a conclusion based on what I glimpsed through the stitching of the person suit that you wear. And the conclusion that I've drawn is that you are dangerous.”

“I'm sorry you feel that way.”

“Please don’t come to my home again. I’ll see myself out.”

She was rather pragmatic he supposed, polite even to the monster she knew that lurked in the room. He couldn’t help but prod at her just a bit more.

“Will Graham and I have entered a relationship.”

Bedelia paused near the door, “To what end? Besides your own?”

“I care for him. I’m afraid Alana Bloom did not approve.”

She nearly allowed a smirk to form, “I can see through your stitching Hannibal. There was far more to it than a simple love triangle or an issue of professional misconduct. You’ve allowed your obsession with Will Graham to evolve into a possessive attachment. How far will you allow your protective streak dictate your actions? And what will your attachment cost you?”

“Careful or I may just think you don’t approve either.”

She gave him a measured look before leaving quickly. He rather thought it went well. Hannibal had just enough time this evening to pay her one last visit.

He did so love having friends for dinner.

*****

Will made it to work once again reasonably early and well rested. He tried not to dwell on why exactly he slept so well and what tired him out to do so. He had work to do after all. He had several classes in the morning. Will desperately tried to focus on his presentation and not the fact that several of Alana’s students had transferred into his class. Her classes were cancelled and the department was trying to find a replacement for next semester. He tried not to dwell on it at all.

He made it to lunch without any interruptions. He should have known that wouldn't have lasted. Jack came in with Beverly in tow, striding as purposely as ever.

"We have a scene Will. Local PD found Freddie."

He nearly dropped the sandwich Hannibal had packed for him. Wrapping it back in the parchment paper, he grabbed his messenger bag and tucked it away before following them out.

Beverly hung back as Jack headed off to round up the rest of forensics. She stuck her hands in the pockets of her leather jacket, trying to look nonchalant. "A little birdy told me you and Dr. Lecter were caught doing the do."

"What! Why would Jack even say anything? That was private!" Will spluttered.

She laughed at his reddening face, "Well, for a hot second, you were a suspect. But Jack had to say how he cleared you and who your alibi was. It's not hard to add it up when he said you were with Hannibal Lecter all night and had just woken up when he got there."

"I could have just spent the night, like friends. In the guest room!"

She guffawed, "Not with that reaction. You need to work on your game face if you're keeping it private. But I don't know why; if I had a hot piece like that, I'd be showing him off."

He knew Beverly was just teasing him, but for a moment he was unsure. They hadn't spoken of exactly how they would act in public. Friends? Boyfriends? Or just not say anything and let people draw their own conclusions. Will didn't particularly care, but he knew Hannibal had a reputation he liked to cultivate.

"It was a sudden thing, and I haven't really had time to speak with him about where we go from here." At least he was being honest. Sort of.

Beverly allowed a satisfied smile to settle, "You haven't noticed the way he's been looking at you. Half the time he seemed like he was purposely trying not to be so focused on you, the other times he was fascinated by you. And I don't mean as a psychiatrist, but as a man, you know? Dr. Lecter totally noticed your cute butt."

Will had known Hannibal was conflicted with his feelings, it's what had led him to kill the agent in the first place. But actually having someone else observe it and see Hannibal's growing affection for him was compelling. That attachment was felt so keenly that rather than accept it, Hannibal had decided to sever it. Yet the link had still been enough to connect them, even through death. Oh God, he needed to stop this weird line of thought. He was starting to sound like the protagonist in a trashy paranormal romance. *His love tamed the cannibalistic serial killer, but what was stirred within him was truly monstrous.*

He gave a quick cough to cover his embarrassment. "Like I said, we still need to discuss some things.

She playfully hip checked him, “Professor Graham bagged himself a doctor. Ooh la la.”

“Shut up Bev.”

*****

Apparently, a running group had found her in the late morning. The Baltimore PD took witness statements and closed off a large part of the scene before contacting the FBI. Jack was ticked that they weren’t getting the scene as fresh as they could have, yelling at the superior officer on scene his full thoughts on the matter. Will and the forensics team made their way past the police tape and were directed by several officers to the scene.

Will wasn’t sure exactly what Hannibal could have done with her. He suspected that it would still be in the Copycat style, but he wouldn’t discount a new appearance of the Ripper.

Freddie looked rather lovely. If one ignored the blood. Several racks of antlers were attached to a large dying oak tree. She was impaled in the middle of the strange totem pole of antlers, horns tearing through her winter coat. Blood remained streaked down her chin and had dribbled out of the wounds on her torso. Her arms were wide spread, hooked at the elbow on an upper notch of the antlers. She almost looked Christ like in her death, something he was sure Hannibal had done intentionally for aesthetics and not a message. The Copycat wasn’t supposed to have a grandiose vision after all.

For once he didn’t have to imagine a death; this had been part of his design. Hannibal had simply handled the rest, acted as his hands when he couldn’t. The design was as much a homage to Hobbs as it was a gift to Will. *Your enemies are my enemies.* He could feel whisper in the back of his mind as he focused on the scene.

Jack came up not long after. He was for once out of the way and quiet, something Will was pleased he had finally learned to do. Taking in all he could, he went over to his boss.

“This was the Copycat Jack; it’s similar to Marissa Schurr in the Hobb’s cabin. He must not have been too pleased with either of them, this scene is far more dramatic than his previous 2.”

Jack let out groan, “She wrote an article about how she thought the killer worked in the FBI. There was other rampant speculations, but she mostly let it be known that she didn’t think it was Nicholas Boyle doing this.”

As they had been talking, the antler set she had been impaled on had been lowered with her body thanks in part to Price and Zeller and some officers that had brought a ladder out to the scene.

“Her tongue’s been cut out Jack,” Price yelled as he started taking close up photos.

Jack gave a look to Will, almost as if the action was expected. He would never know it was Will that had cut it out.

Zeller was finishing photos of the tree and remaining racks of antlers. “Fuck, we haven’t even finished processing the last scene and now we’re stuck with this one.”

“Real sympathetic Brian. You do know these are people right?” Beverly shot back as she photographed around the perimeter.

“You know what I mean. We’re so backlogged now. Even if there is something here, it’s going to take us a while to process everything.”

Jack finally intervened. “I know the past week has been tough but he won’t stop until we catch him. We’ve already lost too many people to this, too many people we know, to stop.”

Will had to give it to Jack, he gave a good speech now and again.

*****

It had been a rough day. Some part of him felt awful for making the Forensics department work so hard to catch a fictitious killer. They hadn’t even finished the autopsy on Alana yet before they had another scene to process. Will finished up his report in his classroom, knowing they would all be scrambling to finish the labs on the two crime scenes, maybe even finalizing Abigail’s. He took the photos of Freddie’s crime scene and packed them up with his other files, knowing Jack would appreciate the initiative. Another darker part of himself that he was more likely to entertain these days, wanted to show them to Hannibal and reminisce; a fucked up parody of vacation photos.

When he got to his house, he found an unfamiliar car in the driveway. As he parked and walked up, he saw an unfamiliar blonde woman was sitting on his porch. As she stood, he couldn’t help but notice how artful her appearance was, her careful combination of color and pattern. She was elegant and sophisticated, something that made him wish he kept better care of his lawn and garden beds.

“Hello, my name is Bedelia Du Maurier.”

The name was vaguely familiar, “You're Hannibal Lecter's therapist.”

She gave a small nod. “I've heard so much about you, I feel I almost know you.”

He felt himself pause. She was surely bound by doctor-patient confidentiality; there must have been a reason for her coming and speaking so frankly.

“Would you like to come inside? I have a feeling this discussion may be better taken indoors.”

She once again gave a small nod. When he opened the door, his whole pack spilled out, tails wagging and chasing each other to the front lawn. That finally got a soft laugh from her. She ran her hand down Winston's back as he pranced around them, before taking off after the others.

"Come on, they'll be fine. I leave the door cracked open and they come in when they're ready."

It was odd to see her sit so demurely on one of his old arm chairs. He hadn't even seen Hannibal sit in his house.

"Would you like something to drink? I could make some decaf."

Bedelia replied, "That would be lovely."

He bustled about the kitchen, putting the grounds in and adding water to his old coffee machine; nothing as fine as Hannibal's silver monstrosity.

He came back out to find her looking over his lures. "Such intricate work. You have an eye for detail."

"It comes with the job. They say I have a knack for monsters, but everyone is just a person really. Shaped by their experiences and psychology; I just pick out what I can see and report it."

"Your pure empathy at work. I can see why Hannibal is so taken with you."

"Has he told you? That we're dating?"

"Yes, rather enthusiastically in fact. And that is one of the reasons that I'm here."

Huh. That would probably explain her breach of ethics; she must have suspected Will was in danger. Luckily, the smell of coffee wafted in the air, prompting him to excuse himself to serve their drinks.

"How do you take your coffee?" he called out from the kitchen.

"Just a splash of milk please, no sugar."

He decided to keep his black but with several spoonfuls of sugar. He needed something to lighten up this conversation.

Taking their cups out, he noticed she had returned to an arm chair. As they both settled in their chairs with their cups, she started off their conversation once again.

"I understand you better than I thought. I wanted to meet you before I withdraw. I'm cutting social ties for my long overdue sabbatical." She took a small sip of her coffee.

"But before I left, I could not in good conscience leave without fully informing you of the extent of Hannibal's obsession with you."

He nearly choked on his own coffee. Quickly swallowing he replied, "I may be familiar with it."

Bedelia arched an eyebrow, "Do tell."

"He…well. He cared so much that it…unsettled him and he acted accordingly." Will wasn't sure exactly how much she knew about Hannibal. It was best to keep it as vague as possible.

She started to look intrigued. She even leaned forward, "He tried to kill you then?"

He frankly wasn't surprised by anything anymore. "Yes. Obviously, he didn't succeed. Umm, is it safe to say you understand him? As his psychiatrist?"

"It's easy to say that, but he lets so few even glimpse beyond his person suit. I may have had a peek, but I don't think it would be too far off the mark to say you've seen the persona shrugged off. What lies beneath, so to speak. You would know him far better than I, perhaps more than anyone I think, Mr. Graham."

"Why? Because he tried to kill me and didn't succeed?"

"Hannibal is a man that acts in his best interests and with intent. If he wanted to kill you, he could have easily done so. The fact that you still live is telling."

Will almost wanted to contradict her. No, well you see, he did kill me. He gutted me, slit my throat and harvested my organs. And it fucking hurt too. At least the first time I died.

But he decided to keep things simple in their already complicated situation. "I managed to… circumvent the consequences and we came to a mutual understanding. Hannibal can be fairly rational when given the chance."

"Fascinating. I've only observed him as purely self-serving. I admit then when I first heard you had entered a relationship with Hannibal, I worried that perhaps he clouded your judgment or manufactured insight for you to believe; a subtle persuasion, if you will. But I don't think that is the case."

He sipped at his coffee, finally excited for a conversation with a psychiatrist. "I haven't been really able to explain this to people, for obvious reasons. But…he loves so much, so deeply, and having that level of affection directed toward me is certainly overwhelming, yet I can't help but feel greedy for it. I've never even had a sliver of the level of devotion he's showed me before. I should be afraid, it's not healthy, but it feels right to me."

Bedelia leveled an accessing look at him, "Is it what you want or are you simply taking what's given? Hannibal may have lulled you into thinking you've tamed him, but beneath his bespoke suits and medical degrees, he is most assuredly the most dangerous man I have come across."

He put his cup on the floor, "I know that. I profile for a living Dr. Du Maurier. But perhaps as interesting as Hannibal finds me, I finally found him interesting as well."

Her professional scrutiny appeared to pull back and turn into a placid façade. One he knew was purely reactionary when she understood. He wasn't simply a coveted possession, Will was Hannibal's partner, in every sense of the word.

"I see. His obsession was not merely one sided then. I hope for both of your sakes that you don't find yourselves too fixated on the other. Inattention to detail could very well be your downfall."

"Is that your professional opinion or a warning?"

"Neither. From one friend of Hannibal's to another, it is simply advice given in the hope that I won't eventually be tracked down by the FBI for a statement."

Will wasn't quite sure, but he was certain to let her leave of her own accord. He was positive Hannibal in the same situation, would have already killed her. In fact, he had done so with Alana already. But Will felt a certain kinship with Bedelia Du Maurier. She was brave in the face of someone she knew was dangerous. She continued interacting with Hannibal, spoke with him candidly, and was perhaps fascinated by the monster underneath. She frankly reminded him of himself. But while she was withdrawing, already feeling too much of Hannibal's influence, Will gladly accepted the full brunt of it.

"I will take such advice under advisement Doctor. And if I may offer some in turn? Hannibal is fastidious in his planning and loathes loose ends; they ruin the tidiness of his finished work."

She finished drinking her coffee, keeping her eyes on him the whole time. "I wonder Mr. Graham, why you would offer such advice and not simply act in Hannibal's best interests."

Will smiled. "I typically don't care for most psychiatrists, but you seem to have a sense of morality that drove you to tell a doomed man that the devil was breathing down his neck. I can appreciate that more than most."

Bedelia returned his smile, "Ah. I think I understand you better now. Under certain circumstances, it's far better to be at the side of the devil than in his path."

"Well, persuasion and mental trauma tend to have that effect. Or it could just be love."

She tactfully hid her laugh behind a cough. She placed her empty cup on the floor as well, before standing. "I should be going Mr. Graham. It was lovely to speak with you after hearing about you so long."

Will led her out, taking a moment to take a quick head count of his dogs in the front yard. Satisfied they were all there, he turned on his porch when he noticed she was watching him carefully again. He must have passed her final assessment when her brow relaxed and she imparted some final words.

"It may be small comfort, but I am convinced Hannibal has done what he honestly believes is best for you."

“Thank you Dr. Du Maurier. I hope if we ever meet again, it’s under better circumstances.”

Bedelia walked down the few steps before looking back at him, a coy expression on her face. “Perhaps not an invitation to dine. Hannibal has a tendency of having friends for dinner.”

He hid his chuckle, but not quite as well as she had earlier. Yes, he did thoroughly like speaking with her. It was refreshing to have someone in on the joke. Hannibal’s puns were awful.

*****

Will didn’t hear from Hannibal that night. He suspected he was preparing all his trophies for consumption and hoped Bedelia managed to get away. It was a strange act of defiance that he held onto, that all of Hannibal’s careful machinations might not always work.

The next day at work was rather surprising. Jack had actually allowed several techs from the Baltimore law enforcement’s forensics department in help. Typically he kept everything in house, but with the large influx of crime scenes, and a cross-country serial killer causing a rise in public outcry, he caved for faster results. They already had the hair fragment recovered from Abigail; all that was needed was something to connect Alana and Freddie to the same killer. Will had no doubt that an expertly planted piece of evidence would point to Nicholas Boyle on each one.

After his classes had been dismissed and he was catching up with grading, Beverly bustled in with several files in hand.

“We finished all the autopsies. Similar MO. The cuts all resembled the same knife, we figure some sort of hunting knife based on the curvature. Unsurprisingly, Abigail had the most organ loss. Alana was missing her liver, and Freddie her lungs. Abigail appeared to be the only one that had her organs and muscles removed while alive though.”

Will took a moment to glance away before finding his focus on the bridge of her nose, “His sister Cassie Boyle was killed in a similar fashion. He felt more of a connection to his sister and Abigail; he wanted them to feel him killing them rather than just the pain.”

She looked momentarily impressed, “Whoa. Sometimes I forget how good you are. Then he took Alana’s liver because Hobbs wasn’t able to take Elise Nichols’?”

“Freddie lost her tongue and lungs so she wouldn’t be able to spout anymore lies. We’re dealing with someone adrift now, he has no true sense of direction and that makes him especially dangerous.” His own lies spilled from his mouth. It wasn’t particularly difficult to weave a false story. Will had some practice now.

“Jimmy is finishing up some soil samples we found in Alana’s bedroom. It has a similar composition to the training fields here but we’re waiting on the full analysis for

confirmation."

Will thumbed through the reports, not noticing anything in particular, "What's Jack saying?"

Beverly leaned against his desk, "Just that we need to step up the search before he kills again. The public isn't dealing well with a traveling serial killer."

"I'm going to see Hannibal tonight. I'll ask him for help with a profile, maybe we can figure out if he's more likely to stay put or keep moving." Or whether to keep using the Copycat killer as cover or return to the Ripper. Typical relationship things.

"Look at you guys, so domestic. Talking about serial killers over dinner. How cute."

Will only smiled. Oh, if she only knew.

*****

He hadn't really planned to see Hannibal that night but thought he could make the first move. Will hadn't heard from him and wondered what he had been up to. He suspected he had been trying to track down Bedelia Du Maurier, but he pushed that thought aside as he knocked at the inner office door of Hannibal's practice.

The change in Hannibal's expression from polite interest to genuine joy at opening the door proved that he had made the right choice.

"Will. Punctual as ever."

He huffed a laugh, "I don't have actual appointments anymore."

Hannibal smiled, "And yet I always leave your timeslot open. Do come in."

Chapter End Notes

I really almost killed off Bedelia. But then I thought about it, and Will actually seemed to like speaking candidly about Hannibal with her. She was like an actress that knew what was happening backstage as well as on stage, you know? And Will peaked behind the curtain too and finally has someone he knows he can speak to about it. And they need friends they don't eat, lol.

This was a more transitional chapter. I think we might be heading into the final stretch, ooh.

# Gaze for long into an abyss...

Chapter Notes

OMG I'm alive! Sorry guys, I've been sick with a bad case of flu. I'm not quite over it, but I'm feeling loads better.

When I first started plotting this story, there were 2 scenes that I envisioned. The one herein, and one for the ending. I hope you like it as much as I do! You'll know it when you read it <3

I messed a little with the timeline of the events in episodes, but it works for this AU verse.

Warnings: Side character deaths that are canonical.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal had been in a certainly foul mood. So foul in fact, he kept himself from calling Will, knowing he would pick up on his mood and prod at him. He was almost tempted to allowing it and taking his anger out by killing Will. That thought stopped him short and proved to himself that he was not in a good frame of mind to speak to his agent. His search for Dr. Du Maurier had been fruitless and the fact that she stayed one step ahead both impressed and infuriated him. When he heard the knock at his office door, he was half sure it was Jack wanting help catching their elusive Copycat and prepared for another conversation to run the man in circles. He was so very pleasantly surprised to find his dear Will instead, perhaps set in the habit of his usual appointment time.

Hannibal had missed him greatly and just seeing him melted the foul mood that had befallen him. He sat in his usual chair, a pantomime of their previous sessions. Will sat opposite to him, taking off his glasses and putting them into his messenger bag resting on the floor.

“I do apologize William. I have been terribly busy as of late, of which I think you have had a front row seat to.” He smirked, truly enjoying that someone could finally appreciate his work.

Will chuckled, “Well, you did say Freddie would be a surprise for me, she certainly was.”

“The composition was a tad hasty on my part, but it did come together in the end.”

“Everything you do comes together in the end it seems.”

Hannibal looked off to the side, “Some better than others it seems. Though I do wonder, how has the investigation been going? Any closer to catching the elusive Nicholas Boyle?”

Will tilted his head and glanced at the doctor, “He is proving particularly elusive. Jack is getting rather frustrated with him. He’s worried he’ll slip through our fingers like the Ripper has.”

“I wonder, what would you prefer to happen Will?”

The agent looked contemplative before finally settling his mind. “I think if the Copycat continues down this path, it’ll seem too fast an evolution. It would be a good time to either have him lay low or disappear completely, for the time being at least.”

His dear boy, so quick.

“It may be time to shelve the Copycat and give Jack a moment of respite. The Ripper is always on the path to return to his sounders.”

“Free range rude I suppose?”

Hannibal smirked, “Whenever feasible, one should eat the rude.”

Will gave a soft laugh. “I think I prefer your sense of humor now more than I did. I used to think it was so dry, but you’re surprisingly witty. Too bad I’m the only one that can fully appreciate it.”

“You have been given a rare gift. I would hope you appreciate it.”

Their easy banter helped soothe any lingering anger he had about Dr. Du Maurier’s escape. He was rather hopeful that she would slip up though. Being on the run from him was nearly impossible, proven by his sister’s killers. But he’d give her the momentary victory. Especially when he had something he had been meaning to discuss with Will.

“I have an event coming up, nothing terribly extravagant, and I was hoping you could attend with me.”

Will leaned forward in his chair and asked cautiously, “What type of event?”

“A hunger relief concert. There are going to be several operatic performances and a cocktail hour. I would very much like you to attend with me.”

He was terribly understating his feelings. He wanted Will to go with him, desperately. For all the confidence Hannibal exuded, he still wanted to show off his catch to others. For Will Graham was nothing less than quite the catch. He had a brilliant mind, coupled with his empathy, made him nothing less than a perfect partner for Hannibal. Even in his most foul mood, he would be exquisite.

Will looked momentarily flummoxed, perhaps not thinking he would be included in Hannibal’s world so easily.

“That actually leads me to something I’ve wanted to discuss with you. How did you want to go about…all this? Do we tell people we’re dating or just not mention it and let them think what they want? I don’t know what you’d prefer…”

Hannibal sat back in his chair, crossing his legs loosely. "What would you prefer Will? You seem quite concerned about my own preferences, but what about your own?" He thought for another moment, "Or is this you projecting your own insecurities onto our relationship? Need I remind you that I have told others already or our change in status; Alana Bloom and more recently, my own psychiatrist, Dr. Du Maurier."

Will looked rather annoyed, "Careful. I may be dating a psychiatrist, but that doesn't mean you can psychoanalyze me whenever you want."

"Rather difficult I'm afraid. Observing is what I do. I've mentioned that I can't shut mine off any more than you can shut off yours." Will did get rather prickly when he felt defensive.

"Are you going to answer my question?"

The doctor smirked, "You were the one that answered my question with another question."

Will slumped in his chair, tilting his head back to face the ceiling, "I take back what I said. You're not witty, you're pretentious."

"And you're stubborn; but instead of complimenting each other, perhaps you can give me an answer."

Will gave a soft sigh and rolled his head to the side, finally looking at Hannibal. "I'll go because even if I have reservations about social situations, you wouldn't have asked if you didn't want me to go."

"No need to sound so excited, but I'll take it nonetheless." He got up and walked to his desk, trying not to let his delight show. He flipped through his papers nonchalantly as he found the receipt for a tux he already had made to Will's measurements. "It is a black tie event. Should I have a tux sent to you?"

"Yeah. I suppose that answers my question. You want to show me off."

"Who could resist?" He double-checked that the delivery was to Will's address, before he tucked it away. "I'll make sure the delivery is on time. The end of the week is fast approaching."

"Am I your boy toy then? What will the gossips say?" Will's sarcasm was making a comeback. He was running on the defensive again it seemed. For all that he acted as if he didn't care what others thought of him, it appeared he cared about what others would think of Hannibal for choosing him. It was endearing that he thought to protect Hannibal's reputation, but there was truly nothing to protect it from.

"You're nothing more than yourself and that's all I want from you. While I appreciate your concern, I am continued to be amazed by how little you think of yourself. I will be happy to have you by my side."

He walked over to Will, still sitting sprawled out in his chair. "And if there are those that are truly disturbed by our partnership, then we'll simply have them for dinner."

That startled a laugh out of his agent, “God, I don’t think that’s what they had in mind when they wanted a dinner invitation from Dr. Lecter.”

And he looked so lovely laughing, the stress he carried from his job often only allowing him his harsh sarcasm as an outlet. Hannibal stepped closer, bending down to capture that still laughing mouth in a kiss, gripping lightly on Will’s jaw to steady his startled form. The doctor was inexplicably drawn to devour and swallow that easy joy, licking into the agent’s eager mouth. His dear Will never was one who accepted affection easily but he had been adapting and changing in more ways than one.

Will pulled away, “So, if I’m getting this right, you really want to show me off to your classy friends. As your boyfriend? Am I missing anything?”

Hannibal straightened up, “No you covered everything quite succinctly. But we are missing dinner. Would you like to come over?”

Will smiled, “Yes, just let me call the dog sitter.”

*****

Hannibal looked forward to his upcoming event. For once it wasn’t anticipatory of the performance, but rather for the first time he and Will would act as a couple in public. He was especially touched that Will would attend something he wasn’t entirely comfortable with just to please him. His ego felt especially well-groomed from that.

Even his patients with their trite grievances and petty neuroses weren’t able to sway his uplifted spirits. Dr. Du Maurier was far from his mind as he focused on presenting William to one of his social circles. Imagining the lines of Will’s tailored tux was enough to keep him from physically showing Franklyn Froideveaux how little he wanted to be his friend.

The night approached, and with only a few phone calls and texts to keep in touch due to Jack Crawford hell-bent on catching Nicholas Boyle, Hannibal was unsure of Will’s mood. But opening his door to find the loveliest version of his dear Will he’d ever seen, quickly assured him that he would have pleasant company for the evening. He was right on Will’s measurements; the tuxedo elegantly highlighted his trim figure and long legs. But it was the clean-shaved face and gelled back hair that created such a longing within him that the only way to crush it was to remind himself that Will was already his. He had fashioned himself closer to Hannibal’s image and it was nothing short of beautiful.

Will looked almost self-conscious at Hannibal’s intense study. “Well, it would have been a shame not to dress up.”

“I may not have wanted you to be anything other than yourself, but this is nonetheless a wonderful surprise.”

Will glanced away for a moment before meeting his eyes. "Maybe, sometimes, I'm a better version of myself because of you."

Hannibal could only reply honestly; "I've found a similar sentiment to be true of myself." Grabbing his car keys before he did something that would make them horribly late for the concert, he ushered Will out, hand placed comfortably on the small of his back.

*****

Will appeared to like the performances. Hannibal suspected it was his empathy that allowed him to connect as strongly to a song as Hannibal did with all his years of appreciation. He may not have been quite as enthralled as the doctor was, but he did understand the beauty of a well-performed piece. The cocktail hour was when he truly saw his agent flourish. Will may have acted as a misanthrope, but he knew social convention and paired it with his ability to read situations and people, he did quite well in acting as a respectable date. Hannibal didn't particularly care how Will presented himself; if he were perfectly honest, he would have liked to see his biting criticism make an appearance. But Hannibal was irrevocably charmed by the gesture. Will seemed so concerned for Hannibal's reputation; it was rather endearing that he cared enough to try. He may not have necessarily had wanted Will to change his demeanor for these people, but already he had already changed so much consciously for Hannibal. It simply delighted him; to craft someone into the full brunt of their potential. And Will was nothing less than his best on Hannibal's arm.

His society friends and acquaintances took to Will quickly. Hannibal gladly interceded on any gossip and put all speculations to rest; the empath's blush lessening the more it was said. They left each group assured that Dr. Lecter had finally found a partner, one that was just as charming as himself.

The only hiccup of the evening occurred when Mrs. Komeda cornered them to not so subtly suggest that Hannibal have another dinner party. Will seemed to agree with the socialite, giving that soft look from under his eyelashes he tended to do unconsciously when he was unsure how to voice what he wanted. Hannibal was easily swayed, his inspiration fully formed before him in his agent. Naturally, the hiccup, being an overly attached patient, chose that moment to insert himself into their conversation.

"It's so good to see you. This is my friend Tobias," Franklyn was quick to jump in, following social convention to the bare minimum, his intense gaze never leaving the doctor.

It was the first time in the evening Will appeared to bristle, inching closer toward Hannibal. Never one to miss an opportunity to see what could occur, the doctor slipped his arm around Will's waist, bringing him flush to his torso.

"This is Will, my boyfriend." Hannibal enjoyed the sharp breath Will took at the first use of the juvenile term in the evening. He enjoyed the complete despair that crossed his patient's face only marginally less.

Mrs. Komeda asked, “How do you two know each other?”

Hannibal should have known that his careful attempt to redirect the conversation would be thwarted. Franklyn was quick to try and display his connection to the doctor. Perhaps in having a title himself, he hoped to put himself on equal footing with Will in the conversation. Even his own companion, Tobias, knew where Franklyn’s attention was firmly centered, even if his own gaze was fixated on Hannibal as well. That innate predator sense within Hannibal rumbled, finally understanding the threat in their midst.

Another thought passed his mind. This was probably what Will was reacting to in the first place; understanding the darkness within humanity and recognizing it within his line of sight.

The conversation was innocuous at best, but being the object of intense scrutiny from both Franklyn and Tobias brought up Hannibal’s ire, his empath being rudely ignored. Will’s warmth at his side was the only comfort during the awkward exchange. Such a pity their night out was burdened by the one patient that didn’t understand boundaries. Both interrupters left, after exhausting all small talk; Franklyn casting one last look before leaving.

His dear Will was always one to break awkward situations and simply said, “Who’s hungry?” much to Mrs. Komeda’s delight.

Hannibal’s dinner party would be a welcome distraction. And what better way to keep Jack Crawford from scrutinizing the Copycat then with a Ripper sounder?

*****

Their time together was unfortunately split but Hannibal accepted that it was necessary. With leads growing cold for the elusive Nicholas Boyle, Jack was intent on combing over all the available evidence numerous times. Will was certain that nothing would be found and if it was, he would be there to redirect it. But Hannibal was quite familiar with Jack Crawford and his level of obsession with those that slipped through his grasp; as the Chesapeake Ripper, he knew this quite well. Distractions were well in order.

Such a shame another case took precedence. The man crafted into an instrument would have been novel if it wasn’t so gauche. And from Franklyn’s account of his friend Tobias with psychopathic tendencies, this was a deliberate murder to incite Hannibal’s curiosity. Too bad he truly had no need to add a narcissistic serial killer to his circle of friends. Or wanted friends that were so self-entitled they thought a simple gesture would compel the doctor to gladly accept any overtures from a like-minded individual.

When Will arrived at his office at much the same time as he had previous times, it was a much welcome reprieve.

Throwing his bag on his chaise lounge, he took his customary seat. “Between you, this human cello killer and the other team catching a med student botching back alley surgeries, the FBI has been too busy to care about the Copycat.”

Hannibal took a moment to consider what wine to serve. Pink, he thought. “Wasn’t that the goal? To take Jack’s mind off scrutinizing our killer Nicholas Boyle too much?” He filled both glasses and handed one to Will, sitting across from him.

Will hummed in assent, sipping at his wine as his gaze turned inward, perhaps still thinking on the now numerous cases.

“I believe I may know the identity of your killer making people into stringed instruments. Franklyn, the patient we had the unfortunate luck of running into at the charity event, has told me his grave concerns of his friend Tobias and disturbing things he has said. But what I found most compelling was that he actually owns a string shop.”

Will’s gaze sharpened. “I knew there was something off about Tobias. He had this haze about him, a thin veneer of civility I suppose. Something about his abrupt calmness disturbed me.”

Both had recognized something in Tobias Budge that night. Hannibal smiled, knowing Will was the methodical compliment to his own controlled savagery. They certainly were well matched.

“The crime scene practically had the name ‘Tobias Budge’ written across the man’s vocal cords. He doesn’t do subtle.” Will drank more of his wine. “I wonder, was he trying to contact you or make a better impression than that night we met him?”

Hannibal took his time to form his thoughts, swirling his wine and taking an appreciative sniff before sipping. “Perhaps as much as we saw something in him, he saw something in me. Maybe he recognized that ‘thin veneer of civility’ you so easily picked up on; my own person suit. He’s a psychopath looking for a connection. I believe he may be looking for the chance at friendship with someone of perceived similar interests.”

A chuckle left Will, “I told you, they’d all think I was just your boy toy, that’s why both were so quick to ignore me. At work, all I’ve been hearing has been what a baby face I have. You’re lucky my beard’s starting to grow back.”

“I was rather insulted on your behalf that neither of them even acknowledged you. Terribly rude.”

Will finished off his wine, a slow smirk crossing his face. “Well then, what’s to be done about that Dr. Lecter?”

Hannibal took a rather large sip of his wine, keeping eye contact with Will. Holding the half full glass, he responded, “I believe it may be time to lead Uncle Jack on a merry chase he has a chance to succeed at.”

“And luckily, success is such a broad term too.” And for a moment, Hannibal could see the encroaching darkness, something darkening and adding depth to Will’s irises, something other. Madness.

“Precisely.” And Hannibal finished off his wine, completely satisfied.

What use was madness if it couldn’t be shared by two?

*****

Will left a text that he and some police officers were going to investigate Tobias Budge’s string shop in Baltimore. Hannibal would have enjoyed accompanying but even he abided by his 24 hour cancellation policy. His appointment with Franklyn dragged on far longer than he had hoped; he didn’t take well to being given a referral to another psychiatrist.

“You’re giving me a referral? But you were a referral!”

Hannibal held his composure, “I am also a part of the problem. You focus too much on your therapist, and not enough on your therapy.”

“You lost respect for me because I wouldn't report Tobias, didn't you?”

Hannibal prepared to cycle back the conversation, what would be the equivalent of an ‘it’s not you, it’s me’ speech.

Or he would have, if his office door hadn’t banged open, Tobias Budge walking in with a body over his shoulder.

“Report Tobias for what?” He said as he threw the body to the ground. The blood stains on Tobias appeared to originate from the large piece of ear he was missing but also mostly from the body on the ground. The neck and face were horribly slashed, thick lines cut into flesh, with large rivulets of blood staining the familiar green jacket.

“Oh my God.” Franklyn uttered, his eyes finally focusing on Will for once.

Tobias had a smug look, as if his kill was expected. “I came to say goodbye Franklyn. I just killed three men. The police came to question me about the murder.” He turned his gaze back upon Hannibal, “It only seemed fair I brought you the body of your lover. Such a waste. If you had simply accepted that our friendship would have been greater than either of us, his death wouldn’t be on your head.”

Hannibal allowed the smallest of smiles, “That’s where you would be incorrect, on several accounts. I have no need for an additional partnership; Will and I have been doing quite well as the Copycat and Chesapeake Ripper.”

Franklyn didn't seem to know where to let his eyes land. He bounced his gaze between the two killers in the room and the body on the floor. "Oh my God," he whispered repeatedly to himself.

Tobias scoffed, "Used to. He did try so hard to be brave, I'll give him that. He is one of those rare people that runs toward danger. When he heard me attacking the two officers, he came with no regard for his own life. He tried to save them; he even managed to shoot me. But that righteous part of him couldn't just let me kill off the last one. He even put his gun down to try and bargain with me to release the officer. But I still sliced through his neck and then I sliced through your boyfriend's pretty face and neck."

The doctor couldn't help the bubble of laugher from escaping, he nearly appeared manic in his apparent madness. But Hannibal knew; death would never touch him and Will permanently ever again.

The near crazed laughter finally startled Franklyn from his stupor, perhaps thinking his psychiatrist couldn't handle the situation anymore. He took a deep breath, and spoke in the most patronizingly calm voice Hannibal had ever heard.

"Ok you have to give yourself up right now. This plane is going down. Let it have a controlled descent. We can get you back up in the air again. There's rehabilitation for everyone."

He stepped closer to Tobias and edging around Will's body on the floor. "You've done a horrible thing, and I know that you wish to God that you didn't. But you did. And there's nothing you can do to change that. Only thing you can change is your future. Right? No? You're probably scared. You probably feel like you're all alone."

Tobias looked bewildered by the strange psychobabble, "I'm not alone."

Hannibal took the impromptu therapy session in stride; he supposed Franklyn knew quite a lot about psychology with nine referrals. He smoothed down his jacket and got his breathing back under control from his spontaneous laughter fit.

"That's enough playing around. You've had your fun, now is the time to be serious," He spoke towards the direction of Tobias, Will's body lying in large blood stains on the rug.

Franklyn perked up, "That's right. You're not alone. Nothing has happened in our relationship that you and I can't---" His neck snapped loudly in Hannibal's office, work-worn hands clasping his jaw firmly.

As he dropped the body of Franklyn, Will's eyes never left the shocked eyes of Tobias.

"You should have let those officers go, Mr. Budge."

And Hannibal knew that even if he brought out the best of Will, nothing could compare to this righteous fury. His face and torso were stained with dark dried blood, it even matted the curls of his hair. But it was his eyes, so much like when that fevered sweetness of

encephalitis burned through him and he was lost in his own mind. He wasn't lost though, that madness was fully formed and sharpened into a deadly intent.

Hannibal could admit to himself that he was never more attracted to Will than he was at this moment; especially when he advanced upon Tobias and struck out with a brutality the doctor had never seen his dear agent ever exhibit. There was no hesitation nor was there any fear of what he could become if he toed the line of morality. As both men fought across his office, the inevitable piano wire coming into play and Will easily dodging the second strangulation of the day, Hannibal was struck by the ferocity of his agent's strikes. There was killing intent in each move and Hannibal only realized that Will was cornering Tobias when he snapped his arm between the rungs of the ladder. That inevitable shadow that had plagued him as he worked on profiling killers had lifted. Instead it solidified above his head into those lovely antlers that Hannibal found so delightfully enchanting. Will Graham was finally at peace with his inner demons, perhaps by becoming one.

He chose that moment to intervene. The doctor picked up a letter opener from his desk before striding to the fallen Tobias, staring horrified at Will's visage; the antlers fully solidifying and inky coloring starting to spread across his face.

The doctor murmured, "I did say I had no need for additional partnerships when I am already in one so perfect."

Tobias held his broken arm close to his body, his piano wire long lost. He looked terrified. "What sort of monsters are you?"

Will moved back, allowing Hannibal to move closer to Tobias.

Hannibal ran his lengthened fingertip along the flat side of the letter opener, a darkening claw longer than the blade. "Mr. Budge, we're the monsters that are the worst sort. The kind that are never satisfied."

Hannibal struck quickly, the letter opener finding its way into the side of his neck, nicking the carotid artery, before pulling back the blade. Tobias tried in vain to hold pressure on the wound but a steady stream of blood started to spread across the floor of his office.

The doctor stepped back and stood beside Will as they watched Tobias Budge die beside the body of the one person that genuinely wanted his friendship. Such a shame it wasn't enough for him.

*****

"I'm fairly upset with you," Hannibal said as he applied gauze and tape to Will's hands and neck. Both men decided that it would be best if the doctor 'treated' Will's wounds before the actual paramedics arrived. His previous training as a medical doctor would help aid the idea

that he could easily treat Will's injuries in the time it took the FBI and emergency services to arrive. Far less scrutiny on non-existent cuts.

"For what?"

"You snapped Franklyn's neck when I've been thinking of nothing else for the weeks I had him as a patient."

Will huffed, "You didn't leave me much choice. You wanted me back up and we can't have a witness telling anyone that will listen that I came back from the dead. Or how about that confession that we're both the Copycat and Chesapeake Ripper? Not very subtle Hannibal."

Hannibal sniffed as he finished taping off Will's knuckles. "What's done is done I suppose."

The empath sighed. "How about you kill the next guy you look forward to killing, however you want. Will that make you feel better about this?"

He smirked, "Very much so."

Hannibal had always heard that good relationships were grounded on compromise, he supposed it would have to do. One couldn't get what they wanted all the time, and in Hannibal's case, most of the time would be enough.

*****

Jack Crawford and various police officers, agents, and paramedics arrived not long after Hannibal called. He and Will both sat on the chaise lounge, looking as pathetic as they could, while still maintaining some dignity in the face of two deaths in the office.

Jack looked torn between furious and worried. "What happened? And please elaborate on why I have two dead officers and two dead here?"

Several paramedics attempted to look the two over but Hannibal allowed a bit of charm to slide out; no I'm quite alright, my friend here is the one that was injured. Not too severely no, just superficial lacerations I was able to dress; I was a medical doctor.

Will gave a tired sigh after the paramedics left. "It was an ambush Jack. He must have seen the cop cars pull up. He killed the first officer straight away by stabbing him through the neck. The second officer and I gave chase to his basement. Mr. Budge was quick to cut through his neck with piano wire. I was able to get a shot off and hit him in the ear. We struggled for my gun and it was lost in one of his water vats. I was pushed down the stairway. He said something about loose ends and took off. The only thing I could think of was Hannibal's patient so I ran over and found he had killed Mr. Froideveaux. He appeared to be preparing to attack Hannibal with piano wire. We scuffled and he got me a few times, I was winded from earlier. I was lucky Hannibal jumped in when he did; he stabbed him in the neck with a letter opener."

Jack mulled about the office as agents swarmed and started taking photos. "And all this blood?"

Hannibal chimed in, "Will received several injuries that while not dangerous, were nonetheless quite vigorous in their bleeding. That's why it was tantamount that I treated him quickly, before a small injury became a larger problem."

That seemed to satisfy Jack's curiosity for the moment. He ran a hand down his face, for a brief moment, looking as if he was overwhelmed. He quickly came back to himself, looking at both agent and psychiatrist. "Give official statements to the PD and then you're free to go."

Before Jack slipped away, he offered, "Dr. Lecter, about your dinner party, it would be perfectly reasonable for you to cancel after a day like today."

Hannibal offered a small smile, "It would but what would be the purpose? The best way to move past a traumatic event is to not let it affect your daily life. And I would very much like to be surrounded by my dear friends, now more than ever. I do hope you still attend."

Jack gave a small smile in turn. "Of course, Bella and I wouldn't miss it."

After giving their statements, and making it to Hannibal's car, Will finally said what he had been keeping in. "Laying it on a bit thick Dr. Lecter."

"We have a dinner party tonight, I would say anything to expedite our release. There is still a lot of prep work needed."

Will gave him a side eye, "Lots of processing needed to turn the rude into something appetizing?"

He smirked, "Naturally."

*****

The sous chefs were present, helping with sides. Hannibal was intent on preparing his *sow's* blood.

"Centrifugate. Separate the matter from the water. Creates a transparent liquid. Serve with tomatoes in suspension and everybody will love the sweet taste."

Will sat in the chair in the corner of the kitchen, feeling it was best to stay out of the way. He was dressed in a nicer blazer, putting his foot down when Hannibal offered to have a suit made and delivered to him.

It was truly of no consequence; Hannibal told the tailor to delay delivery for a later time. He would see William in that lovely navy suit he had made for him; there would always be

another occasion for a suit.

“Jack seems pleased that the FBI has closed several cases finally; it seems to have calmed down his obsession with the Copycat at least.”

Hannibal poured his separated blood, “And yet the recent rise in Ripper killings has him baffled. He is on his way down a familiar path of obsession.”

Will looked contemplative for a moment, “Maybe it’s time to move on; repetition leads to stagnation.”

Hannibal met Will’s eyes and knew. There was certainly a plan he had in mind.

The doctor couldn’t wait to see what it was.

With the company of the various sous-chefs and servers moving through the kitchen, he could only answer, “Perhaps.”

But he knew his answering smile was the only response Will needed.

*****

The guests were seated, the table was decked with platters of cannibalistic delicacies unbeknownst to them. Will sat to Hannibal’s right, looking proud as the table applauded the beauty of Hannibal’s food.

The doctor could only smile, and raise a glass, “Before we begin, you must all be warned: nothing here is vegetarian.” He shared an amused look with Will, “*Bon appétit*.”

Chapter End Notes

It was the Tobias fight if you were wondering which scene. If any of you are familiar with the manga/anime Kuroshitsuji (Black Butler), I was really inspired by the first scene we see Sebastian act truly supernatural.

I like to slip in little bits of dialogue from the show when I can, a little wink to fannibals ;D

And guys, I think there might be one more chapter left. Maybe an epilogue, but I'm going to be so sad to end this. But you guys are going to freak and love a scene I'm envisioning for the finale! I'm so excited to share it with you! <3

# The abyss also gazes into you.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Murder, gore. Graphic descriptions of violence, two characters try to kill each other, thorough description of a gruesome crime scene.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will had been content with his life for the first time in a long time. He should have known that's when things would start to fall apart. He had been cleaning his living room, a quick sweep to stay on top of all the dog hair. While sweeping it up with a dust pan, he noticed something bright along the dirt, several long curly strands of bright red hair. Freddie fucking Lounds persisted in his life. The momentary rush of anger he felt towards her was quickly doused with a cold fear. This was potential evidence, evidence Jack and the science team could have easily found if they had searched his house. It was luck Jack had tried to look for him, luck that Hannibal had created an alibi for him that had worked. Will wasn't satisfied to live by luck. He had found for most of his life that if it wasn't for bad luck, he would have no luck at all. He couldn't trust it.

He tried his best to put it out of his mind, and it was easy. Will found a lot of his time split between trying to find time for Hannibal, working, and thinking. He could admit that Jack putting him in charge of the review of evidence for the Copycat was something convenient but mind numbing. He knew what he'd find, only what Hannibal wished the FBI to find. So he was left to his thoughts at work when he wasn't teaching. And while he enjoyed his new relationship and its new found freedom, he found himself considering things. Remembering those strands of hair, much like the hair that he had found at Hobbs' cabin so long ago. How they'd acted up to this point wasn't sustainable. It was during the preparations for the dinner party that he started to truly think that maybe a change was needed. Sooner or later someone was going to piece together the cluster of violent murders in the Baltimore area to a certain doctor and FBI agent or that they occurred before one of Hannibal's extravagant parties. They'd already killed too many people too close to their work. Jack may not act like it, but his trainees had called him the Guru, perhaps there was some credence to that.

But he came back to the friendly advice of Bedelia Du Maurier more often than he'd like.

*I hope for both of your sakes that you don't find yourselves too fixated on the other. Inattention to detail could very well be your downfall.*

And Will could feel it, perhaps his empathy answering and echoing Hannibal's own brand of madness. It grew when he killed Freddie Lounds, so perfectly gift wrapped for him in his own home. It could have started before that, the deaths of Abigail and Alana done so swiftly for Will. He was happy they were using the Copycat as an excuse, any connection to the Ripper would have been wholly uncharacteristic. And that was the problem, they were

starting to act abnormal. Will had compromised his beliefs and Hannibal was acting rashly. They were both caught in each other's orbits and wouldn't stop until they were caught.

That could not happen. Will refused. He could admit they had been lucky, very lucky. If Hannibal had been anymore wrapped up in Will, or their plans had failed, they would have been caught. The time he was being forced to devote to a case he knew would never be solved only compounded his thoughts, but he wasn't sure what to do about their situation.

But even as he was transferred to look over the Ripper files, the sudden rash of new murders making Jack split Will's time between his 2 largest cases, he still had the large amount of time to think. He mostly thought on how quickly Hannibal had integrated him into his life. From taking him out to show off to his high-society friends, to taking time to cook together in Hannibal's kitchen, he was now an integral part of his life. When Will considered what he had shared of his own life, there wasn't much. Adding on to his stress of their situation was Will worrying if he was a bad boyfriend. Really, this was his life now; trying to keep out of prison and cover up murders, all while dating a serial killer way out of his league. Just what he wanted to be when he grew up.

God, he needed sleep. Or get out of the office. But after the fight at Hannibal's office, Jack was keeping him on desk duty; he was basically trapped and read over case files he would never reveal to anyone the true nature of. The dinner party had at least assured his boss that they weren't suffering PTSD, but it was a near thing. It's just what they didn't need, extra scrutiny.

Packing up at the end of the day, Will headed home to start planning. He needed the time to figure something out before everything blew up in their faces. Before another moment like Ms. Lounds' hair found in his house. Hannibal just seemed content to maintain their status quo with how he *dealt* with situations. Honestly, Will liked the few friends he had left, he really didn't want them *for dinner*.

*****

There were fewer things that Will liked better than coming home. His most favorite thing, sometimes the only good thing that would happen in a day, would be to come home to his happy dogs. They would all greet him, so excited to see him. Some days, that had been the only thing keeping him going; he had to take care of his small pack. Thinking on what to do, he knew, without a doubt, he would bring his dogs. If he was ever forced to choose between them and Hannibal, he would refuse the choice and keep both. He'd find a way.

He fed his dogs and played catch until it got dark, before he settled in for a long night of planning.

At the end of the night, with all his dogs asleep and with only a few hours until he had to head into work, Will had a rough plan. Now he simply had to tell Hannibal that they'd be leaving soon.

*****

Will managed to make it to the next day, feeling like he could finally breathe. He made a quick call to the dog walker and headed over to Hannibal's that night. For once, he used his key, taking a particular pleasure in entering a house that was considered a home for him. Setting his coat and bag aside in the foyer, he made it to the kitchen, taking the moment to appreciate Hannibal in his element. He pan seared asparagus with a flourish of olive oil, taking the time to squeeze lemon juice over the spears as he turned off the burner. He took a piece of parmesan and grated it lightly over the pan before finally looking up and smiling at Will.

"Enjoy the show?" the doctor said as he washed his hands.

Will walked further into the kitchen, making it to the counter of the island to lean his elbows on. "I always do. What will we be dining on tonight?"

"*Beef* Wellington with seared asparagus and a mixed rocket salad."

That brought him up short. He was used to not knowing what anything was when Hannibal listed it off, but really? "R-rocket?"

Hannibal paused on his way to the fridge, presumably to get the already prepared salad. He smirked, "Arugula salad. Rocket is derived from the French *roquette,* simply a designation on the type of plant. Arugula has a peppery tasted and is rather refreshing. I paired it with sliced apples and pears, with a scattering of walnuts. Topped with parmesan, it'll be a perfect counter point while still tied to our flavor profile of the evening."

Will could appreciate when someone discussed something they knew a great deal about; he had a tendency to fall into a lull as someone spoke enthusiastically. Hannibal was no different and Will smiled as Hannibal brought the salad bowl out, grating cheese to garnish.

"Rocket. Huh, if it was called that here, I would have eaten nothing but that when I went through my space phase."

Rocket salad. Would wonders never cease?

Hannibal brought down plates. "What seems to be on your mind William? You've seemed preoccupied as of late."

Fuck. Of course he'd notice. Will had wanted more time to try and breech the topic, but it seemed he was going to have to just jump into it. But he hesitated, staying content to watch.

Hannibal brought out his *Beef* Wellingtons, delicate puff pastry covered *beef* tenderloins and plated them, taking care to lay asparagus spears parallel on the plate.

Taking both plates, he nodded to the salad bowl, “Could you bring that as well? I think perhaps this conversation is going to need some wine.”

Will wordlessly followed, carrying his rocket salad to the dining room.

Settling the plates and sitting down, Hannibal poured out wine and took the moment to observe Will. “You seemed stressed Will. Has something happened at work?”

The empath took the time to sip from his wine glass, before starting. “I’ve noticed, well, I should say I’ve realized that we’ve gotten very wrapped up with each other. Sometimes, I forget where you end and I begin.”

A very quiet sort of stillness came over Hannibal. That unnatural stillness Will had sometimes seen of him when he was unsure of how to react normally. Probably best to fix that before he got the wrong idea.

Will sat his glass down, “This is coming out all wrong. Just...I think we need to look forward more. We can’t keep killing everyone that gets too close; people that can be connected to the both of us are going to get us locked up. What happens if someone associates that?”

Hannibal appeared to be more relaxed as Will explained, finally starting to eat his *beef*. “If someone figures it out, we’ll simply kill them as well.”

“That’s the problem Hannibal. I’ve been thinking that we need to leave. We’re not going to remain free if we keep on this path. We’re going to slip up, we already have. There was still Freddie Lounds’ hair at my house. What do you think would have happened if Jack felt the suspicion was enough to get a warrant? Do you at least understand my frustration?”

The doctor paused in his eating, looking momentarily surprised. “Ah. I suppose I see your point.” He finally put his fork down, “Where would you have us go then? And when?”

Will took the time to slice an asparagus spear delicately, “You’re taking this far better than I could have imagined. You’d leave this, all of this so quickly? Your practice, your home?”

“Your concern of the sustainability of our activities is not one that I’ll dismiss easily. I can admit I may have been…remiss in my abilities to gauge the situation. The circumstances have been unique for me.”

Hannibal sipped at his wine, “I never entertained the idea that I could ever have a true partner, someone that could ever know all of my facets and be willing to accept them. I never even imagined that I would find someone that would partake in my hobbies either. The experience is novel and something I believe I have obsessed on, as my psychiatrist has informed me. And because of that, I would leave my life here behind to maintain our new relationship before my intense focus puts us in danger.”

“We’re not going to stay out of prison if you’re expecting me to be the rational one. Most people already think I’m halfway crazy, you can’t trust me with this much. I’m already second guessing what I’m planning. You putting so much faith in me---I can’t understand it sometimes.”

“And that has been my failing. You shouldn’t have had to suffer this on your own. Tell me what you have planned, and I will aid in any way I can. This is a partnership William, let me be your paddle.”

He reached out and took Will’s hand in a gentle hold. And he finally felt like he could be happy in his life.

*****

“Are you sure they’ll be okay?”

“Yes, my Aunt and Uncle will gladly care for them before we collect them. They may not even want to leave France.”

*****

Will set out to do what he should have done sooner. He decided on Beverly, catching up with her as they poured over Copycat crime scene photos, trying to find a hint to his next move.

“Bev, there’s no true pattern here. He’s adrift, lost…and that’s what worries me. He’s acted unpredictable up to this point. I can’t see his next move.”

She bit at her lip, closing one folder and moving to the next. “Freddie was only killed because she tried to discredit him. So, the only pattern we have is Alana was close to Abigail.”

“Exactly.” Will aimed for nonchalant and hoped she’d make the leap.

Beverly looked up quickly, “You don’t think he’ll start going after the team do you?”

“What else is there? Why wouldn’t he go after those that are trying to catch him?”

“Fuck. We need to tell Jack, get protective details. Do you think that’s why he went after Alana? He ran into her at Abigail’s house, could have figured she was working on the initial investigation.”

“I don’t know, I can’t get a read on him. That’s only happened when the suspect is too unpredictable to follow any thought pattern. But we know he’s dangerous. You need to keep your gun on you at all times Bev, I’m serious.”

She gave a half smile. “Never go anywhere without it.” She paused, brow furrowing in contemplation. “Hey, do you think Dr. Lecter might be a target too? He worked a lot with

Abigail and has been at Quantico a lot lately."

"It's possible. God, this has just become such a mess. Jack's been after me for results, but there's nothing usable here. And I'm terrified if there's a new scene; who's next?" He put his head in his hands, feeling the weight of everything and hoping it wouldn't blow up in his face.

"You can't think like that Will. The Copycat has to slip up sooner or later. Maybe we'll catch a break and get a sighting. Let me tell Jack and let him know about your theory."

"He won't go for the protective detail Bev. He's going to see this as an opportunity to catch Nicholas Boyle." Will gave his hair a quick ruffle as he looked up.

"I hope you're wrong."

Her face looked determined and Will knew that Beverly Katz was one of the truly finest agents of the FBI. Will only hoped he could keep her out of the crossfire.

"So do I," he replied back.

*****

"Look, I can do it. You have to finish getting everything ready."

"If you're certain. My equipment is in the basement. Do call if you need assistance."

*****

Hannibal walked calmly through FBI headquarters in Quantico later that day. In his hand, he carried Will's ever present messenger bag.

He walked slowly through a particular hallway, relieved when Agent Crawford strode up beside him.

"Dr. Lecter, what a surprise."

Hannibal gave a polite smile, "Just a quick errand. Will forgot his bag when he took some files home. He's coming over for dinner and I thought to pick it up for him."

Jack gave a nod, "He has been working very diligently lately. I admit that maybe I've been pushing him too hard after everything that's happened. How's he doing?"

“As well as can be expected.  He is very intent on trying to figure out Nicholas Boyle’s next move; he doesn’t want to arrive to another scene knowing the victim.”

“He’s a good man.  Not too many people would be willing to look at what he does, let alone pull as much as he can just from scenes.  It’s his bad luck that he’s the best.”

The doctor gave a sharp smile, “Yes, he is the best at what he does.  I’m afraid I need to be on my way; dinner preparations.  Good evening Agent Crawford.”

“Goodbye Dr. Lecter.”

Both men gave each other quick nods as Hannibal left down the hallway.

Beverly came around the corner walking towards Jack’s office.  She offered a quick smile to the doctor as she passed him in the hall.  She strode to catch up with Agent Crawford.

“Hey Jack!  Can I talk to you for a minute?”

*****

When Will finally returned to his house from the back shed exhausted.  He laid out plastic sheeting on his floor before he set down Hannibal’s tools.  Bringing over a bucket he had filled with water and had splashed some bleach in, he rinsed everything off.

Feeling more tired than he expected, he started to unzip the plastic suit, Hannibal’s ‘murder suit’.  It had done the job, he supposed, but he didn’t see much use beyond keeping his clothes clean of biological evidence.  And his hair was still free to get blood splatter or fall and to leave evidence.

He was probably overthinking it.

Will found himself tugging ineffectually at the zipper.  Looking down, he noticed some blood had seeped into the zipper, drying and sticking the teeth together.  Sighing, he tugged harder and found himself struggling with it, feeling himself start to sweat wrapped in the plastic suit.

And that was how Hannibal found him, letting himself in quietly to Will’s house.  He set the messenger bag on an arm chair.

Amusement colored his tone, “I did say to call if you required assistance William.”

Will looked up sharply, knowing he had to look ridiculous.  “How the hell do you do this all the time?”  He pulled at the plastic suit, “How do you even clean off this thing?  The dry cleaners?”

Hannibal stepped closer, batting away Will’s hands, as he took a firm grip of the zipper pull.  “Repetition breeds familiarity.  It becomes ritual.”

The ease that Hannibal slipped off the suit, unzipping it and having Will step out of it paid credence to that. How many times had Hannibal slipped this plastic suit off, turning it inside out in a practiced manner as he folded it up?

“It must have been lonely.”

“Yes,” Hannibal replied.

Will licked his lips, “But you’re not alone now.”

The red of the doctor’s eyes near glowed, “No I’m not.”

If repetition bred familiarity, the ease in which they came together was purely habitual. Will grasped Hannibal by the shoulders, pulling him closer, the plastic suit falling to the side in a bundle. They met halfway, kissing softly in Will’s living room.

The empath pulled away, “Do you think we have time?”

Hannibal smirked, “You did rather conveniently move your bed down here.”

“Try waking up on the roof a few times and see how you react.”

The look Will received was complete fondness. “Always so quick to solve your own problems, never asking for help.” The doctor ran a thumb along his cheek.

Will simply pushed off Hannibal’s suit jacket, taking time with the buttons of his waist coat.

“I’m not alone now,” He replied.

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully as he pulled away and moved toward the bed, pulling off his tie, slipping off his waist coat and shirt surprisingly haphazardly, leaving them in a trail across the floor.

“We might as well take advantage of this moment. We will be hard pressed for time until we are settled.”

“Fine by me,” Will replied, shucking off his clothes in a hurried manner.

He moved toward the bed and sat on the edge to kick off his shoes and socks.

“What time’s the flight?”

Hannibal undid his belt, sliding off his shoes before he slid off his trousers. “1 AM red eye.”

Will smirked, “Plenty of time, Dr. Fell.”

The doctor smiled back, “Of course Mr. Smith.”

Hannibal moved toward the middle of the bed, laying back against the pillows. Will couldn’t help but follow, moving along his body, giving a light kiss to a sharp knee and muscular

thigh. He licked along the light trail of hair along his abdomen, noting the quick inhalation when his teeth gently bit along Hannibal's belly button.

"Ticklish?" Will asked as he kneeled between Hannibal's spread legs, running his hands along his sides lightly.

Another quick breath escaped the doctor, "Perhaps."

It was just another thing to add to his growing catalogue of facts about Hannibal. He ran his hands along his chest, combing through the light chest hair.

"Do you want to fuck me Will?"

That stopped his careful ministrations.

Will paused, "Now?"

"Of course; what better time. Would you happen to have anything for lubrication?"

For all that they had vaguely said, Will had honestly never expected Hannibal to offer so candidly.

He wet his lips, "Yes, I do. Just give me a second."

Will leaned over to the nightstand. Behind a pile of books, he pulled out a tube of lube. He noticed Hannibal shifting and lifting his hips up, and only realized the doctor was completely naked when his boxer briefs slipped off the side of the bed.

He returned to between Hannibal's thighs, spreading them as he uncapped the bottle in hand. He admired the large uncut cock in front of him, curving towards the doctor's stomach.

"When we have time, we should spend all day in bed, just switching." Will smeared some lube on his fingertips, rubbing it to warm it.

Hannibal shifted further up the pillows, "Will your dogs be inside or outside?"

Will laughed, "Inside the house of course. But I'll just close the bedroom door."

"Sensible," the doctor replied, smirking.

The empath carefully traced Hannibal's rim, taking time to spread lube before pressing further inside. "I'll have you know I'm quite sensible and capable." He twisted and stretched his fingers, seeing Hannibal start to respond; his breath catching, his intent gaze being overshadowed by dilated pupils.

"Your capability has never been in question dear Will. Tell me about your victims."

Will added more lube to his fingers before pushing back in and stretching. "Some rather unfortunate carjackers that just so happened to choose the wrong target." He gave a half smile, "No one is going to miss them."

He curled his fingers upward as he added a third finger.

Hannibal licked at his lips, “You made yourself into a lure; taking cues from Abigail?”

Will stretched his fingers and bumped against his prostate, resulting in an actual gasp and writhe from the doctor. “More like a concerned citizen, trying to help in any way I can. Civic duty and all that.”

The doctor leaned up on his elbows, his nose tracing along Will’s cheekbone, “Doing bad things to bad people makes you feel good.”

Will leaned in and turned his head, catching Hannibal’s lips in a quick kiss, “Let me make you feel good.”

Hannibal huffed, “And you think my pillow talk is awful.”

“I’m working on the mood and you’re ruining it,” Will smiled as he leaned his forehead against Hannibal’s.

The doctor clenched against Will’s fingers, “And you’re wasting time we could be using for more pleasurable ventures.”

“And you think I’m the impatient one.”

Will pulled back and dragged his fingers out, before he applied more lube to his hand. Slicking his cock, he draped himself over Hannibal, feeling the hard warmth of the doctor’s erection dragging along his stomach. He leaned his weight on one elbow and took a moment to simply look at Hannibal. The man that he was willing to runway with, to leave his life for to start a new one with.

“I think, Dr. Lecter, that we’ve equalized in our relationship.” He took himself in hand and teased the head at Hannibal’s entrance, feeling the tensing of Hannibal’s thighs against his hips. “I think you could ask me to do nearly anything and I’d be willing to, simply because you asked.” He pushed in slowly.

“Yes,” Hannibal whispered, digging surprisingly sharp nails into Will’s shoulders.

Will lapped at the doctor’s collar bone, before settling his mouth against Hannibal’s neck. He kept moving slowly, enjoying the firm heat against his cock. He would have kept moving leisurely if he hadn’t felt Hannibal gripping his hair harshly, bucking up to increase the pace.

“F-fuck Hannibal,” he bit off.

Hannibal rearranged his hard grip on Will’s hips, his feet planting firmly to the bed as he arched up and rocked himself, setting his own rhythm. Will could take the cue; he pulled out nearly all the way before slamming back in, deciding on deep and harder thrusts.

“When I killed them, all I could think of was how proud you’d be. I even fell into your mindset, the plastic suit only helping me imagine I was you, killing pigs that didn’t deserve to live.”

Hannibal's eyes looked near feral, "Did they beg?"

Will murmured a quick "Yes," before they both tore at each other's lips, kissing as savagely as they were fucking. Hannibal folded his legs around Will's hips, allowing for deeper movements. He could feel sweat gathering on the back of his neck, felt his grip along Hannibal's thighs start to slip with the roughness. Will focused on the soft sounds Hannibal made, the sighs and moans that he typically didn't vocalize. He made a mental note that Hannibal responded well to prostate stimulation as he aimed his thrusts upward; the intense hold the doctor had on him only increased, his soft sounds getting louder. Feeling the pressure and heat, hearing Hannibal respond so beautifully, Will didn't last long before he came.

Hannibal clenched tightly against Will's cock, dragging out his orgasm. Will had enough sense to reach a hand between their bodies to quickly finish Hannibal off. The deep sigh and tight hold Hannibal had on him solidified the idea that yes, switching now and then had its merits.

Feeling drained, Will pulled out, smearing cum and lube along their thighs. He fell beside Hannibal on the bed.

"That was a good send off for our departure," he sighed out.

Hannibal murmured, "Undoubtedly."

*****

"Did you still want to have dinner at your house? I could just set up the scene before we leave."

"It would fit the alibi. I have a piece of sommelier I saved after I cleaned out my stock.

*****

They returned to Hannibal's for the last time. The doctor was quick to sauté his sommelier flank. Will occupied himself setting up the bodies in Hannibal's car and tried not to dwell on what sort of turmoil he'd be creating for his co-workers. He tried not to think about whether they would mourn him either.

For all the other nights that they had sat down to dinner, it seemed normal enough. They ate and drank a perfectly paired wine. But it was after when a certain excitement seemed to affect them; a rising anticipation.

Will could admit he felt the same strange giddiness earlier as he killed.

“Where would you prefer to stage our murder?”

Hannibal took a moment to finish his wine before replying. “The kitchen I think would be fitting.”

The empath laughed, “Because that’s the first place you died?”

“Precisely.”

*****

For once, Hannibal left the empty plates in the dining room, he left his pans unwashed. The scene was set, a casual dinner interrupted unexpectedly. They both slipped on gloves as they walked into the kitchen.

Will pulled out the large 10 inch kitchen knife from the knife block.

Testing the weight of it in his hand, he glanced at an amused Hannibal, “I left my gun at home before coming to your house and we’re both attacked.”

“Reasonable. Do try for arteries, the more blood splatter the better.”

Will readjusted his grip on the knife, “See you soon.”

Hannibal smirked, “Always.”

He lunged at Hannibal, taking a hard grip on the back of his neck as he slid the knife deep into his abdomen, sliding it out to stab repeatedly. The surprise in Hannibal’s eyes was nearly enough to stop him, so unlike the last time Will had killed the doctor in his own kitchen. He simply slid the knife back out before pulling back and slicing across Hannibal’s ruined torso in a graceful arc. The amount of blood that stained the walls and floor would surely be deemed a massacre.

*****

Will crawled along the kitchen floor, holding onto his side as he slid through puddles of blood. He managed to grab Hannibal’s house phone off the counter and dialed Jack. He picked up rather quickly.

“I’m surprised to hear from you. I remember you saying you and Will had plans---”

The empath was panting, one of his lungs must have been nicked, “Jack, you need to get over here, he’s here. Please, there’s so much blood.”

“Who’s there Will? Tell me where you are.”

A hand gripped Will’s hair, pulling his head back. He let out a yelp as he felt a blade pressing against his neck, sliding against the shell of his ear.

“It’s Nicholas Boyle he attacked us at Hannibal’s, please---”

Will pressed the end call button, placing the phone on the floor. He would have turned his head to speak to Hannibal if the blade of the knife didn’t cut quickly through the cartilage of his ear, severing it.

He jumped up, holding a hand against the new wound, “What the fuck Hannibal. What if it doesn’t come back?”

Hannibal smiled, white shirt tattered and covered in blood, “I would think that if you could regrow multiple organs, a small outer appendage is of no consequence. It will be far more convincing this way.”

Will grabbed at the knife from Hannibal, “Fucker. I’ll show you ‘small outer appendage’” and lunged forward, grabbing Hannibal’s wrist. He sawed through the inside of the doctor’s elbow, blood flowing out in growing rivulets, his own skin starting to darken to that familiar inky sheen.

And Hannibal simply continued to smile, his own eyes darkening from maroon to black.

*****

“Do you want to drive or shall I?”

“It’s your car, have a last drive in your Bentley.”

*****

Beverly was fucking pissed. For once, she had made it home before it got too dark and had settled on going to sleep early. She managed to cuddle her cat for once before he meandered off. Beverly counted it as a win, the first in a seemingly long while. She couldn’t have been asleep for more than an hour before her cell and house phone rang non-stop.

Reaching over, she grabbed at her cell phone mumbling groggily as she saw Jack on the caller ID, “Someone better be dead for you to be bothering me on my day off.”

“Agent Katz, I need you to go to Wolf Trap to check on Will’s house.”

She sat up, far more alert, “Why? Is he alright? Did something happen?”

He sighed, “Just check and let me know what you find. We’ll be at Hannibal’s in Baltimore if you want to head over.”

She threw on the first pair of jeans she found, slipped on her boots before she backtracked and left more food out for her cat. The black cat simply rubbed on her legs in appreciation before slinking off. Beverly tried to hold onto the sound of that soft purr as she drove out, not knowing what she’d find and being completely terrified.

*****

“Jack, it just looks like a break-in. The back door was kicked in and I can’t find any of his dogs, they must have run off. Some drawers are spilled out on the floor and a lot of Will’s files are thrown around. What’s happening?”

“Just head over to Hannibal’s. I’ll call Animal Control to look for Will’s dogs.”

*****

Beverly arrived to Hannibal’s high class neighborhood to find the street littered with police cars. Yellow police tape cordoned off the front lawn of the house. She walked up the sidewalk quickly, flashing her badge to the police maintaining the line.

Jack met her on the front porch, “It’s bad in there. Both were attacked in the kitchen.”

She wet her lips, “Will and Hannibal?”

For once, Jack actually looked truly remorseful, “Yes, from what we can gather. Will called me during the attack. When we got here, there were signs of a struggle and evidence to suggest that…both are deceased or severely harmed.”

“Do you have my kit?”

“Before you go in there, I need to know that you’ll be able to handle this. Both were our friends and co-workers. Can you do this?”

Beverly took a deep breath, “Yes Jack, I can do my fucking job. You didn’t ask these sorts of questions when you made Will look at Abigail’s dead body. Is this sexism and you think I’m going to faint or was Will just special?”

Jack stepped back quickly, “Let’s just see you do your job Agent Katz.” And he walked away, back towards a group of officers.

Beverly Katz was fucking pissed.

*****

The scene was worse than she imagined. Jimmy and Brian were already there taking photos and looked as disturbed as she felt. There was so much blood on the kitchen floor, puddles of it drying brown on the edges. It was splattered on the cabinets, along the counters, but what was worse were the blood smears on the floor, alluding to bodies crawling or being dragged. Hand prints looked as if they attempted to use the fridge handle to lift themselves up before being attacked further; pieces of flesh laid on the floor, sliced slivers of skin and what looked an awful lot like a piece of liver. Used cooking pans still sat surprisingly undisturbed on the stove. There was a large blood stain against the chopping block, pieces of scalp and dark brown hair were smeared into the wood grain. But what caught her eye was the severed arm laying on the ground, the bloodless fingers starkly pale against the floor tile. There appeared to be parts of intestines near the side door, wide open with large blood smears on the floor; the bodies had been dragged out that way. She saw Brian taking multiple photos of the sink walking closer and side stepping the blood, she peered over his shoulder and saw a severed ear within and blood smeared along the rim. Brian looked up, pale and sweaty but he managed a nod.

She took up her camera in shaking hands, “Where should I start?”

*****

The team was quiet as they documented the scene and bagged evidence. It appeared a knife from Hannibal’s kitchen had been used, it was missing from the knife block. The jackpot had been several long wavy blonde hairs Beverly found near the fridge, maybe whoever was gutted tried to pull Nicholas Boyle away.

“Gotcha,” she whispered, slipping the hair into an evidence bag.

The quiet was disturbed as Jack strode in, staying near the entrance to the dining room. “There has been report of a car accident not far north from here. A Bentley.”

Jimmy and Brian appeared too stunned to say anything. She got up from her crouch on the floor and asked what they were all thinking, "Are they in the car?"

Jack had that same look of remorse, "It was a high speed crash into a highway median wall. The car was heavily damaged from the accident, and the gas tank ruptured. They're trying to put the fire out."

Beverly held in any tears she might have shed. Taking another deep breath she simply said, "We're almost done with this scene. We'll head over when we finish bagging evidence."

*****

In the end, it all came down to what could be found of personal effects. The car crash had mangled the bodies, what was left was burnt in the car fire. Two of the bodies appeared to have bone lacerations consistent with repeated stabbings. One of them even appeared to be missing an arm that no one could find in the surrounding debris field. Hannibal's *Patek Philippe* watch was found, the scratch resistant sapphire crystal seeming to protect it from melting. The serial numbers matched his insurance papers as well. What was found of Will's wasn't much beyond a set of keys, all of them matching the locks from his house, car, and surprisingly, Hannibal's house as well.

The last body in the front seat was the worst damaged having taken most of the impact from the accident. All that could conclude it was Nicholas Boyle driving the stolen Bentley was the kitchen knife taken from Hannibal's house and a hunting knife both found in the glove compartment. The hunting knife was consistent with many of the Copycat kills, particularly Abigail's.

Writing her report for the press, Beverly could only do her best to surmise the events that had happened. From looking at the evidence, she pieced together that night. Nicholas Boyle was as adrift as Will had predicted. He did end up targeting the team that had first gone after the Minnesota Shrike and were now after him as the Copycat. Nicholas Boyle went first to Will's house, but didn't find him there. Jack offered up part of a conversation he had with Hannibal that the two had dinner plans at the doctor's house. Boyle proceeded to search Will's house and must have found some evidence to link him to Hannibal, in the process, he had let Will's dogs loose. They were still unaccounted for.

The next part truly haunted her, but she pressed on in writing it out. Will and Hannibal had been eating dinner when Hannibal, was ambushed and stabbed repeatedly, nearly gutted in the kitchen. Their best guess was that he had gone to retrieve dessert or more wine. Will entered and was heavily concussed on the chopping block, consistent with what Boyle had done to Alana Bloom at Abigail's house in Minnesota. Hannibal had attempted to fight Boyle when in the process, he was incapacitated enough to have his arm cut off while he was still alive. Will had woken up and a scuffle took place near the sink, resulting in him losing an ear and nearly having his throat slit, although he was stabbed several times in the chest.

Will managed to reach a cordless phone on the counter and call Jack before he was gutted and most of his intestines was exposed. Both men bled to death in Hannibal's kitchen.

Nicholas Boyle took both bodies in Hannibal's car and headed north driving at a high rate of speed. His haste was credited to Will's call and him being resistant to being arrested. The excessive speed was credited to being the leading cause of the accident.

Beverly finished off her report and sent it off to Jack before heading home. She knew in the morning, she'd start trying to contact next of kin for Will and Hannibal. From what she gathered, neither had any close family. She made a note to herself to look into mortuaries and prepared herself to plan the funerals. It was the least she could do. And she'd make damn sure they had the best funeral she could provide; she'd make sure the FBI footed the bill for Jack's negligence of the true danger Nicholas Boyle was.

When she got home her cat ran to meet her, rubbing against her legs in greeting. Beverly smiled and thought of Will and how his dogs must have greeted him when he got home. She comforted herself with the thought that somewhere both men were together, truly happy, never having to fear death again. It brought a smile to her lips as she finally allowed herself to cry.

Her cat jumped into her lap and simply purred.

Chapter End Notes

And we still have an epilogue left ;D

# Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Someone gets eaten.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*A few months later.*

Will felt happy for once in a long time. They had settled in Italy after finally selecting an older farmhouse surrounded by old vineyards and almond orchards. He was content, playing fetch with his dogs and watching them run far into the distance.

Hannibal came out and walked down the brick walkway, dressed down as Will was now used to seeing him, khakis and a polo shirt.

"Could you possibly go to town and buy fingerling potatoes and white asparagus?"

Will threw another tennis ball for his small pack to chase, "I could, but only if you finish exercising them. They've been getting lazy with the warm weather."

"I've been meaning to go for a run, I'll take them with me."

Will smiled, "I think they'll like that." He crouched down the retrieve the ball from Buster, having to tug a bit to get him to let go.

He threw the ball once more, before he turned to walk back into the house. On the porch, Will turned to watch the setting sun, his dogs disappearing over a hill, with Hannibal watching them peacefully.

It was worth giving up his old life for this new one.

Will made it into the house, quickly gathering up his keys and wallet before walking back out. He couldn't help but grab Hannibal by the arm and pull him into a quick kiss.

"See you soon," he whispered as he walked to the car. Before he closed the car door, he heard Hannibal call out.

Standing there, just a dark shape silhouetted by the setting sun the doctor simply said "Always."

Will Graham felt finally truly happy as he drove into town.

He should have known that's when things tended to go to shit.

*****

Will was loading up his bags when he heard footsteps far too close for someone passing by. The click of a gun safety being slid out of place made him still. The feel of the gun muzzle on the back of his head made him sigh.

“Hello Will. It’s funny, I could have sworn you were dead. I went to your funeral and everything.”

The voice of his former boss made Will keep his hands at his sides, “The report of my death was an exaggeration.”

The gun pressed harder against his scalp, “You don’t get to quote Mark Twain to me. Not when we mourned you, when everyone blamed me for your death. Not when everyone thought I was losing it pursuing leads. It’s funny, I came out here trying to interview someone else entirely, but who did I see in the paper hmm?” A torn page from an Italian paper was slammed on the hood of his car. Will felt his stomach sink; there in a photo was Will front and center dressed in a tuxedo and clapping among a large audience. He remembered that night, an opera Hannibal had been excited to see, that Will had managed to get opening night tickets to. Glancing at the photo again, he felt relief in seeing that Hannibal’s face wasn’t clear, a blur as he rose from his seat.

Jack continued, “I felt vindicated. And it wasn’t hard to ask the opera house about you with the photo and a few words about how I couldn’t reach you on the death of a family member. I followed your trail Mr. Smith, and I’m mostly happy you weren’t going by ‘Will Smith’.”

Will gave an annoyed huff, “No, I just happen to be a fan of *The Smiths*; and my passport says ‘John Smith’ if you must know.”

That got a sharp laugh from Jack. “I will say this couldn’t have come at a better time. I came out here trying to put pieces together and I find the whole puzzle. Not that you particularly care, but I’ve been put on forced administrative leave pending internal investigation.”

The empath tried hard not to laugh, “What for Jack? Dedicating too much time to an unsubstantiated theory? Dubious ethics violations? Having people work on cases where they knew the victims; that’s probably considered traumatic. I wonder what Kade Purnell had to think about it, she’s pretty by the book. Emotional attachment can make the investigative work sloppy, I bet all of your recent cases are under review, right Jack?”

He could hear the tightness of Jack’s voice, trying and failing to reign in his anger. “All but one. The one where the victims and their supposed murderer died in the same fiery accident. That was considered open and shut to everyone.”

Will turned his head slightly, giving a sharp retort, “I would think so, I made sure it was.”

The gun pressed increasingly hard against his head, shaking with Jack's fury, "Get in the car and drive."

Both men got in the car; Jack keeping the gun trained on Will. The aim was lowered as they started to drive, more the abdomen than the head.

"Where to?"

Jack snorted, "Where you're living now. Tell me how you did it. How could you kill your partner?"

Will couldn't help the harsh laugh that escaped, "You think I killed Hannibal?"

"I think you killed him. We recovered an arm from him, while only an ear from you in that kitchen. Was it an argument that got out of control?"

He turned down the main street in town, "I'm pretty sure there were some of my intestines in that kitchen. And my ear with pints of my blood. If anything, your theory already has holes in it. I couldn't falsify the DNA tests when I was already out of the country when they took place."

"It doesn't add up true, but I've known from the moment we closed out the scene something wasn't right. You want to know what it was? For all the violence that took place in that kitchen, there was not one speck of Nicholas Boyle's blood. Very unusual, especially when the victims were 2 men that not long before had killed a serial killer in an office. That scene was covered in biological evidence from everyone involved, but the kitchen only had a few hairs from Boyle."

Will tightened his hold on the steering wheel, "So? Nicholas Boyle killed all those people, do you think he's still out there then?"

Jack sighed, "I'm fairly certain that was you too. A profiler that finally cracked. Every victim past Cassie Boyle was connected to you Will. She was probably opportunistic, and when you had finally let yourself act out, you had no self-restraint left. Hannibal tried to help you, but you were beyond help by then."

"Is that what you think? Then who would be at fault? Suppose I go back with you, we go through the legal motions, how much do you want to bet that my lawyer would drag you into it, you pushed me too hard and I simply shattered. You knew looking wasn't good for me Jack, is that worth your career? You could go back now and not lose everything."

"I've already lost everything Will. Bella's dead, my career's in limbo, all I have left is my conscience and my gut. I can't live with anymore regret. We're going to wherever you live now, gather up your passport and head back so you can face charges. I need my fucking beauty sleep."

They were heading more into the countryside, hills covered in vineyards and orchards, a provincial post card basked in early dusk. Will knew he was getting close to home; he only really had one more argument to try and save Jack's life.

“How are you going to explain the body parts? The blood? If you haven’t noticed, I do have both of my ears. And if it’s easy enough to say a profiler cracked, what about the head of the BAU? You’re already on leave for professional misconduct, it wouldn’t be hard to say you created a serial killer for the FBI to catch, not unlike that Freddie Lounds’ article hinted at. Maybe you killed her because she got too close, maybe you tried to kill me but I got away.”

Jack gave off a bitter laugh, “Is that how you live with yourself? Spinning the truth until it fits? You’re not even a sociopath, I have no idea what you are.”

Will turned down the small road that lead to his farmhouse. He parked at the dead end of the road, still giving the long walk up through rows of old almond trees to convince Jack. A losing battle that with each step he had to reconcile this would be Jack’s last stand.

He turned off the engine and got out the car, “We have to walk to the house from here.”

His former boss scrambled out of the car to keep the gun on him, “Don’t think I don’t know this is you trying to buy more time.”

Will gave a sad smile, “Maybe more time, but not for what you think.”

More time to speak with a man that although had a misguided view on justice, still pursued it; a former friend and colleague.

“What’s happened back home? Did the panic die down after Nicholas Boyle was found dead?”

Jack kept pace with him, the gun kept trained on Will. “Of course panic died down. You and Hannibal were practically saints to the media, people that died trying to catch the murderer. I got thrown under the bus when internal investigations got involved and it leaked how many cases you were consulting on, how close you were to the victims. Beverly has picked up a lot of the extra work, she was the lead agent on your case. It broke her heart finding out you and Hannibal had died, but she kept working. Now that everything’s thrown into limbo with internal affairs, she’s picking up the slack from not having a head for BAU. Zeller thinks she’s close to cracking, like I have if you listen to office gossip.”

Will had been so focused on not having anyone else die, he never really considered what else the people he left behind would be put through. But an alive Beverly was better than a dead one.

“Kade Purnell is typically pretty thorough, you still have time before she brings up any disciplinary action. Why aren’t you back home cooperating with the investigation instead of out here pursuing ghosts?”

Jack looked truly pissed off, “My case is already basically decided by the higher ups; they’re going to make an example of me. They think it was my fault in mishandling the department that let so many people close to the investigation die; that’s damaged the reputation of the FBI. But if I bring you back…”

Will nearly stumbled as he followed the line of thought. "You'll put all the blame on me. You'll say I waylaid the investigation from the inside, I was the Copycat; and you were just caught up in it. This isn't about justice or your conscience, you're just trying to secure your job."

"Don't act so righteous Will. My wife is dead, what do I have left now if not my career?"

Maybe he only remembered Jack fondly, he tended to forget how harshly pragmatic he could be. Will walked stiffly through rows of trees, along leaf covered paths by memory. It had gotten dark quickly, the trees only vague twisted shapes. Jack had pulled out his phone to light their way, its meager light doing little surrounded by darkness. The silence was broken by happy barks and his group of dogs coming to meet him. Will wasn't sure whether to relax or tense up.

His former boss looked at all the familiar faces, "Well, that explains why we couldn't find any of them. Beverly was a wreck thinking Nicholas Boyle killed them too."

"It seemed cruel to leave them when a lot of their previous owners did the same."

Jack gave another bitter laugh, "A monster that cares; your empathy still comes through huh? Did it come through when you killed Abigail and Alana?"

A familiar voice cut in, "No, because those were by my hand."

Both men turned to the new voice, one in confusion the other in mild relief.

"Do you remember that promise we made in your office Hannibal?"

A harsh laugh came out from the dark, "Yes, the next victim I look forward to killing I could, anyway I wish."

Jack quickly moved his gun from Will towards Hannibal's voice, trying to light the way with his phone. With him distracted, the empath quickly stepped away and silently waved his dogs to follow him.

"Dr. Lecter, I'd say it was nice to see you, but I can't. Why don't you come out and we can talk. We can settle this without anyone getting hurt."

There was a slight rustling, leaves along the ground. "That's nice in theory, but you do have a gun. Doesn't seem very civil to me; has he been Will?"

"Not particularly, but Jack's always been…brusque."

A satisfied hum came from the dark, "That does seem rather rude. What's to be done about that?"

It happened fast, a tall shape materialized out of the darkness, inky skin blending in too well. A large humanoid figure, with long fingers tipped in claws easily swatted the phone from Jack's hands, its faint light disappearing into the leaves. But not before he caught a glimpse

of Hannibal's different form; his eyes roving upwards to the large antlers that blended with the shadows of almond tree branches.

"What is this?"

Hannibal tapped the claws together on his right hand, an odd clacking sound echoing through the night. It terrified Jack who could barely see in the darkness, his gun's aim starting to waver.

"I think, Mr. Crawford, one could say this was a reckoning."

Hannibal stepped out of the tree line fully, the faint moonlight highlighting his skin. The dark sheen nearly completely discernable from the shadows. Jack appeared to steel himself, straightening his arm out, firing several times now that he could see his target.

Meanwhile, Will pushed aside leaves and dogs trying to lick his face as he tried to find Jack's phone. He gave a quiet laugh when he found it, looking through Jack's texts and emails to figure out what brought him out to Italy originally. Gunfire continued in the background as he read a terse email from Kade Purnell requesting Jack return quickly or a warrant would be issued, when he heard a sharp cry and silence. There were heavy footsteps through the leaves and squelching sounds Will was familiar with now more than ever. His finished reading an email from Beverly detailing her worry about Jack's less than regular checking in.

He had gotten finally to texts where he figured out who Jack had been after initially when something landed near his legs. His dogs lunged at it, the others looking back at Hannibal, licking their chops and obediently sitting. Will sighed, as more pieces of Jack landed near his dogs to be devoured.

"You're the reason they're getting fat. You keep feeding them your table scraps."

Hannibal gave a sniff of indignation, "They get nothing of the sort, these are prime cuts." He emphasized this by throwing several long strips of flesh to the pack. "And I'm fairly certain that one of them is pregnant, not merely fat."

That caught Will's attention, "What? Which one?" He glanced at the pack, noticing they'd all need a bath for the blood caught on their fur. He couldn't tell if that was true or Hannibal was trying to distract him. Finally turning towards the doctor, he saw his dark form hunched over Jack's body, long limbs tucked under him as he tore out a kidney and ate it more delicately than his horned appearance would suggest.

"Which one do you think?" Hannibal asked, his clawed hand piercing into the organ and causing blood rivulets to flow down his arm.

Will always knew Hannibal could get prickly, sometimes it was best to let him have the minor victory and return to it later. The empath moved toward the Wendigo, crouching beside his larger form. Jack's throat was slashed and one of his arms was at an unnatural angle. His chest cavity was torn open, the skin flayed and strips of abdomen muscle were gone exposing the offal Hannibal seemed to prefer to eat.

“Jack surprisingly wasn’t here after us, he was tracking someone else. He just caught a lucky break with me.” Will tilted the phone toward Hannibal, the soft screen light catching the blood dripping down his chin.

Hannibal’s placid expression changed as he saw the other name in Jack’s text exchanges. A cruel smile twisted his face, sharp blood stained teeth shone bright against his dark skin.

“Luck indeed.”

Will hummed thoughtfully, taking up Hannibal’s hand with half devoured kidney, lapping up a trail of blood.

“It might be time to invite a dinner guest.”

The sharp kiss Hannibal bestowed upon him felt more like it chased after the taste of blood in Will’s mouth, but he could distinguish its enthusiasm for a sense of victory.

And as he returned the kiss, cradling the cool smooth skin with one hand, thumbing at the blood splatter along prominent cheekbones, Will could only smile with his own victory. He had a new avenue to pursue now that he had all the pieces. He might not necessarily be a good man anymore, but he could try to do something to smooth out the mess he left behind.

Sharp claws dug into his curls, tilting his head back as a bloody mouth made its way down to his neck before biting and sucking on stretched tendons. Glancing upward, he thought the rack of antlers blending into the branches overhead, the night sky tipping each point with stars, was one of the loveliest sights he had ever seen.

Sentimentality was getting to him, or maybe it was blood loss.

“So…which of my dogs do you think is pregnant?”

Hannibal bit harder into Will’s shoulder before releasing him with a quiet laugh, “I suppose it would be one of the female dogs.”

The former agent reached up, grabbing at the base of an antler, tugging sharply to the side.

“Yeah yeah, laugh it up asshole.”

*****

Will sent off the invitation himself. It wasn’t quite as elegant as Hannibal’s calligraphy, but a quick letter mentioning that Jack Crawford was no longer a threat and a brief summary of his proposal, which ended with extending an invitation to discuss the particulars over dinner

He had no doubt that their guest would arrive; curiosity was nothing less than debilitating if left unquenched.

Hannibal took his time preparing for their small dinner party. He picked off a taxi driver that knew nothing of customer service for their main course. He fashioned delicate appetizers, spinach *spanakopita* from light phyllo dough to *glacé petits fours* from fondant. It wasn't necessarily a burden to focus so particularly on a menu, far from it, but for once he was channeling his murderous intent into his cooking, rather than as a byproduct of it. Will had made him promise to let him attempt another avenue of pursuit. The doctor had bristled at first; as if he needed permission to do as he pleased. There wasn't even the excuse that they could be connected to the murder, both of them were declared dead. But Will hadn't pressed, simply stated he was merely asking before leaving for a morning run with his dogs. That soft look as he gazed back certainly paused his anger.

He knew well enough when he had lost a fight; he seemed to lose a lot more now. But so long as it was to Will, there would be no need for him to act rashly. Hannibal had the suspicion that Will had perfected emotional manipulation through use of his empathy and the constant proximity the two had as they left Baltimore.

The doctor smirked, what better partner than one made in your own image?

And even if he wanted so badly to simply kill their guest on entry, he would hold himself in check.

A roasted *pork* tenderloin would suffice as a last supper nevertheless. Hannibal was nothing if not polite.

*****

The night of their impromptu dinner, it was Will that ran to answer the door. He seemed to placate Hannibal in his own way by wearing the navy suit the doctor had made for him before they left. It only moderately cooled his anger.

The large galley kitchen was not nearly up to par with Hannibal's previous kitchen, but he appreciated the charm. More so because the hallway leading out to the dining room had the lovely tendency of funneling sound.

He could only catch faint snippets of conversation as he continued to plate. But he found it rather odd…there was a sense of familiarity there, a rapport. And as far as the doctor knew, neither of them had ever met, only knowing of each other through himself.

Hannibal caught the scent of that familiar perfume as he took out his appetizers to the dining room. She looked much the same, if not more tired, yet still resilient. She sat up, straightening her back and gained as much height as she could while seated when she spotted him. Will, so quick to learn to play host, had poured out wine for her, declining any himself most likely because of nerves. Laying his platters on the dining table, Hannibal couldn't help the smirk that cut across his face.

“Good evening Dr. Du Maurier.”

*****

The night progressed much as he expected, stilted conversation with sharp glances from Will and copious glasses of wine poured for Bedelia. She chose not to eat the entrée, instead picking at the *caprese* salad and roasted butternut squash side.

Another point against her, rude even at a dinner party. Having enough with the farce of polite company, Hannibal decided to move the night along.

“It was my understanding that Agent Crawford was tracking you across Europe when he came upon us. Why ever would he be doing that?”

She kept her eyes on him, as she carefully set her silverware down. “Agent Crawford was under the belief that I may know something from our sessions Hannibal. He suspected that perhaps you saw a change in behavior from Will and had discussed it with me. Suffice to say that I did not wish to speak with him on any such matter and kept moving, citing his questionable employment status with the FBI.” She reached for her wine glass, taking a fortifying sip.

Hannibal knew the particulars of Jack’s theory from Will, which were laughable. But he supposed a severed arm was more likely to indicate death than an ear. The empath took the lead on the conversation to launch into discussion of his proposal.

“Dr. Du Maurier, I invited you to not only alert you to Jack Crawford being…indisposed, but also to ask you of your plans now that he and Hannibal aren’t necessarily a factor.”

Bedelia glanced quickly to Hannibal, appearing dubious of the claim, which Hannibal did nothing to alleviate, smirking to show a hint of teeth.

She returned her attention to Will, “I believe I’ve had my fill of travel and may return to my home. But I’m still unsure of how much the FBI is conscious of Agent Crawford’s theories.”

Will took his time to spear a slice of tomato before replying, “Suppose you get more involved, go directly to the FBI, offer up the emails and texts between you and Jack. Kade Purnell has been leading an internal investigation on him and would be very interested in what you have to say. You could shed light on how far he was willing to go to prove theories, stalking and witness intimidation.”

He took his time in chewing, allowing her time to think.

“And beyond that? If it was as simple a manner of making Jack Crawford less credible, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.” Bedelia took her time in assessing Will, gauging something in his gaze as she continued, “I seem to recall you saying that as interesting as

Hannibal found you, you find him interesting as well. To what end? Enough to become him?"

Will and Bedelia were so focused on each other, they had forgotten the other predator in the room. Dabbing at the corner of his mouth, Hannibal interrupted, feeling his civility shatter.

"I find it quite odd that you've spoken to Will before this evening Bedelia. Because as far as I know, this is your first meeting. I'm curious to when you last spoke and what of."

His dear William glanced toward Bedelia for a moment, opening and shutting his mouth once as he gathered his thoughts. His former psychiatrist took another large gulp of wine.

He flashed that too sharp smile, "That was not a request."

For once in their interactions, he didn't see her icy façade but a rising of defiance. "Before I left I paid him a visit to warn him of your obsession with him. He enlightened me to the depths of your relationship and I left. There wasn't some nefarious reason, far from it. I needed to clear my conscience, even minutely."

Hannibal could accept it, which didn't mean he enjoyed the undermining.

Will sighed loudly, "You promised to at least let her think about it. Don't even think of acting before she's decided."

Hannibal turned his sharp smile onto Will. "Even if I accepted your terms, they were under false pretenses. What else have you potentially hid from me? You'll let her return to the FBI; but what will stop her from simply saying we're still alive? Your sense of self-preservation has always been lacking, I never knew it was quite this dismal."

Will's jaw tightened before he spoke, "My sense of self-preservation has always been dismal around you, my self-presentation in general, if I recall."

"That has no bearing on the topic at hand. If you're trying to raise an emotional response from me, you haven't succeeded. In fact, you've only affirmed my first instinct of the evening."

"And what's that? Tie up another loose end? What about all the loose ends back in Baltimore? People's lives we ruined? Why can't I get a chance to fix that?"

"Why do you care for these people we've left behind? I'm truly baffled. This was your plan, to leave. How are you not satisfied?"

"I know, but…thinking about something is different from doing it, seeing how far everything gets effected. And everything worked out for us, just not for who we left behind. Look how Jack got so wrapped up in work from his grief. And---I guess I just care about people, something perhaps you're lacking in yourself."

They sat in silence, the uncomfortable night boiling to confrontation. Bedelia chose that moment to finally intervene, the wine bottle empty on the table.

“You realize that the fact that the both of you are arguing over your potential future means you both see a future together, correct?”

Hannibal turned his glare onto her. “And how did you arrive at that conclusion?”

She sighed, “Your main concerns lie in your ability to maintain your new life with Will, of which you think I’m a threat to. But you fail to understand Will’s concerns. He wants to tie up loose ends much like you do, but in his own manner. Will is so desperate to settle things back home because he isn’t sure if Jack was a fluke; someone else may follow a trail. He’s trying to ensure a peaceful life by creating a peaceful life for those left behind. But you can’t look beyond a perceived betrayal. Rather than look at past actions Hannibal, you should look at present ones for a gauge of sincerity. Your extreme need to maintain your freedom and autonomy is something we worked on briefly before I left, but you aren’t alone now Hannibal. You have someone else you must take into consideration. By easily questioning his judgment, you’ve shown him that you don’t trust his opinion.”

There was an awkward silence as both parties absorbed what Bedelia had said. Frankly, Hannibal wasn’t surprised by her insight; she had been his psychiatrist at one point. One that he refused to relieve of her duty once she retired.

Cooperation would have to be the answer it seemed. And communication. He should have known that, but playing your own psychiatrist never ended well. “Then, I suppose that settles that then. But the question remains, Dr. Du Maurier, would you acquiesce to Will’s requests?”

For once, Hannibal was fully able to enjoy Will’s shock. Perhaps acting rashly had done more damage than he thought, but he at least was attempting to make an effort to reconcile their differing views. And if all else failed, he’d still be able to kill her if need be.

Bedelia ran a hand along her forehead, “Of course. If I had no intention of doing so, why would I have shown up? Certainly not for your *hospitality* Hannibal. As much as you seem to pride yourself on it.”

Will had perked up upon hearing her decision, “You will?”

She removed her hand from her face, “Yes. And if you get me a glass of water and some aspirin, I’ll even try to find a way to handle that other loose end you mentioned in your letter.”

The empath ran into the kitchen, nearly toppling the chair in his haste.

“Shouldn’t have polished off the whole bottle of wine by yourself,” Hannibal quipped. He took up his fork and lightly dragged the tines across his plate for a loud scratching noise.

“God, would you shut up,” she whispered, rubbing at her temples.

Hannibal smirked and continued until he could hear Will begin his return. If he couldn’t kill her, he could at least find a small way for her to suffer.

He had time for one last scratch if he was quick.

*****

Will scratched along Hannibal's back, nails sinking in and leaving red lines in their wake as the doctor grinded into him. He mouthed at Hannibal's shoulder, tongue chasing the taste of salt. He nearly whined as Hannibal gripped hard at his curls to turn his head to accept a kiss more intense than with any real finesse. The blankets had been kicked off the bed, the pillows not far behind. A bottle of lube laid half-heartedly capped on the edge of a nightstand, a small drip making its way down the table's edge.

His legs wrapped tightly around the doctor's waist, hooked at the ankles. Hannibal's hand slid through Will's hair along his neck, cupping his cheek as a thumb traced the plump lower lip. It was easy for the empath to suck the thumb into his mouth, lightly biting it. He bit to simply bite, not to draw blood as they both had the tendency to do with each other. His tongue lapped at the digit as Hannibal slipped it out, smearing the saliva along the corner of Will's mouth.

"Remarkable boy…I think I'll eat your heart."

Will laughed softly, "You did already, quite literally if I remember."

He arched his back to take more of Hannibal's cock, closing his eyes and tilting his head at the stretch. Will was unsurprised by the nose that ran along the strained tendons of his neck, scenting him. Hannibal increased his pace, slick sounds loud in the bedroom, a pace hard enough to bruise hips and thighs.

Those red lines on Hannibal's back got deeper as Will came, cum smearing and caught between their bodies, nearly fully rubbed into Hannibal's chest hair when the doctor came. They laid there, Will curled tightly around Hannibal, fingers slick with blood soothing down his back.

"You were surprisingly rational today. I half expected you to kill her to spite me," Will quipped.

"I may have been rash, yet we've reached a compromise. Relationships apparently thrive on that sort of thing."

Will huffed, "Apparently." His fingers were starting to stick to Hannibal's back from the mixture of sweat and blood.

In that dark bedroom, Will asked again, "Which dog do you think is pregnant?"

As he pulled out and rolled to the side, Hannibal murmured back, "The large white one with the fluffy tail."

*****

Bedelia knew as soon as she entered Quantico that she had made the right choice. A majority of the staff she'd interacted with didn't appear nearly as intelligent as Will Graham. Redirection would be easily achieved and Jack Crawford's fluke would die with him. Or she assumed he was dead; she wasn't entirely certain what happened with him, but thought it best she didn't know. Hannibal may have allowed her to live, but she was under no disillusion that it would only take one misstep for him to race across the Atlantic to finish her off.

She was tired of being terrified. Most of her past years working with Hannibal had been enlightening, but she still felt cautious with him. The perpetual man in a person suit who was not a man at all, but a monster that hid behind sharp smiles and easy hospitality. People gladly let the devil into their houses, never once even knowing what Hannibal could be capable of. But she knew, quite distinctly, how far he could dig into a person's mind and make them think their only option was to do as Hannibal said.

And if she had the chance to keep him occupied with his new found relationship, all the better for her. Hannibal did his worst acts when he was bored. His boredom led to curiosity and his curiosity often led to ruination to those caught in his path. Bedelia was certain that Will Graham would be more than enough to keep Hannibal's interest; he had been all the doctor had talked about through their last sessions of therapy. In much the same way that she liked Hannibal, she liked Will; objectively. She knew in some way that Will might be a counter balance to Hannibal's civilized savagery; morally grey enough to understand more the monster than his fellow man. If she was a woman more prone to flights of fancy, she'd even say it was a perfect match.

But she was not that woman; she was succinct and rational. When she met with Kade Purnell, she could see that she was of the same spirit. It was easy enough to prove her story, the best fabrications have distinct amounts of truth to them. Bedelia spun her story while sitting in that too cold office. She had decided to take a much needed vacation after the rise of the Copycat killer, especially so close to home. She had been acquainted with Alana and her death had shaken her, a sabbatical was a much needed reprieve. And later, Jack Crawford had been the one to notify her of Hannibal Lecter's death, her only active patient. Too much death had followed from Baltimore so she continued her trips to museums and cathedrals and tried not to dwell on things she couldn't change.

Now this was where she took all she had learned while being Hannibal's psychiatrist and surviving him. She acted as anyone imparting delicate information; uncomfortable but determined to impart what she knew. Bedelia pulled a file out of her purse, sliding it to Agent Purnell. Taking a moment to push her hair behind her ear, she moved swiftly onto the next part, the potentially tricky part.

Jack Crawford contacted her, well after Hannibal's death to share a theory. This theory was rather outlandish and Bedelia could find no basis of it within anything Hannibal discussed with her. From what she had discussed with him, the relationship with Will Graham was

normal, with no indication that he was prone to violence. In fact, she found the theory that Will could have been the Copycat ludicrous; he had been the one working the hardest to find him and paid for it with his death. Crawford's behavior turned rather belligerent and he proceeded to follow her across Europe. The evidence laid in the copies of texts and emails he sent in the folder. The doctor even offered Agent Purnell to check her phone records and the numerous calls Crawford had placed to her.

Bedelia Du Maurier offered her professional opinion that he had fixated on the case as a way to cope with its unsatisfying conclusion. She returned home to try and find a reprieve from his continual harassment and finally to discuss it with his employer.

Kade Purnell lifted her eyes from the numerous messages, details he had picked out and thought supported his theory, brief angry diatribes about the injustice of the case, and continual threats that he would interview her extensively when he caught up with her, to simple statements that Will was the Copycat.

"This is very compelling Dr. Du Maurier. I wish you had come to me sooner; this evidence really provides context for his recent erratic behavior. Jack Crawford had been on suspension for some time because of his fixation on the Copycat case and how he had acted attempting to catch him."

Bedelia schooled a careful look of surprise, "I was unaware. I suspected he was working in an unofficial capacity, but not to that extent."

Agent Purnell looked nearly satisfied with the turn of events. "Yes. He told others that he'd use it as an excuse for a vacation. But this," she held the closed folder up, "Proves otherwise."

"I had been worried by his persistence, should I take out a restraining order?"

"That's not going to be necessary. His body was found in a flood control canal along the border of Switzerland and France. No foul play is suspected, we figure he was depressed over his wife's death. He wasn't found until we tracked the last GPS signal on his phone; we had to match dental records. Fixating on you and the case kept him distracted enough to last a few months before it was too much."

"I only hope he found some peace," Bedelia offered as a useless platitude. He was more likely in pieces in Hannibal's refrigerator.

A few last questions were asked and answered but from what Bedelia had observed, Agent Purnell seemed quick to dismiss anything Jack Crawford had touched. She appeared to have completely written him off as an Agent that lost his mind. Which was perfectly acceptable for her purposes.

As Bedelia was led out of the office, she paused for a moment. Taking a deep breath she added only a hint of emotion to her features and voice, enough to charm Agent Purnell with her sincerity but not enough to be written off as overly emotional. "Dr. Lecter was a colleague and friend of mine. From what I understood, he worked for some capacity with the department, consulting. I would like to offer my own expertise if it could be useful."

It appeared she was correct in her delivery because Kade Purnell looked both surprised and pleased. "Actually, we have been looking for a new psychiatrist to help with profiling for the BAU."

And so Dr. Bedelia Du Maurier came to work for the FBI.

*****

She found the work satisfying and interesting enough to keep her mind fluid. Bedelia could see the appeal Hannibal must have found with working on the team. By piecing together the psychological clues from crime scenes and creating a clearer picture of the suspect, her curiosity was assuaged. She paid particular attention to Agent Beverly Katz, remembering the promise she made for a glass of water and some aspirin.

It had been a mere footnote in Will's invitation to the Italian farmhouse. It had been the tipping point to her accepting, a small line detailing his concern for a friend he left behind. That if she couldn't return to clear up Jack Crawford's mess, that if she ever returned, if she could see how Ms. Katz was doing. Will Graham may have changed enough to accommodate Hannibal into his life, but he still retained that empathy that led him to care for one of the friends he left behind. She couldn't say no, not to such sincerity and when she was looking for some form of redemption.

She had killed one patient, let one get away with murder, but perhaps she could actually help someone. And Beverly Katz appeared to need some help. Outwardly, she did her job, but she had taken over much of the responsibilities of the head of BAU; a replacement not yet found. She scheduled meetings, took over budget overviews, while still doing her crime scene work. She was wearing thin and still appeared shaken whenever they encountered scenes with large amounts of blood. After a few weeks of providing insights into killers, Bedelia Du Maurier approached Kade Purnell with another proposal to help the department.

In much the same way as her first, her initiative was rewarded. Beverly Katz was assigned to her for unofficial therapy.

*****

Answering the front door of her home revealed Beverly Katz, unruffled by the cooler weather in her leather jacket and boots.

"For the record, I don't want to be here. I don't need therapy, I passed my psych evals," she started off with. She looked tired, bent but not yet broken.

Bedelia allowed a small smile to slip through as she led Beverly to her sitting room. “How lucky for you that this isn’t therapy then, simply conversations. Maybe you’ll even find you like our sessions.”

Beverly sat heavily in a chair, spreading out her legs and laughing, “I don’t find you that interesting.”

The doctor sat in the other chair, crossing her legs delicately. Still smiling she replied, “You will.”

*****

Bedelia sent off another letter to a friend in Italy detailing interesting cases she worked on and how well it was going with her new patient.

An ocean away, Will read the letter with a smile before passing it off to Hannibal to continue playing with the puppies, his other dogs laying in the sun.

Chapter End Notes

I just want to say thank you to everyone that gave kudos, commented and bookmarked! It means a lot to me!

This was my first Hannigram story and my first multi-chaptered story. I'm so happy I finished. XD I hope you enjoyed it.

In my mind, Beverly and Bedelia start dating at some point~ ;D

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!